Tibet after Empire

Culture, Society and Religion between 850-1000

Proceedings of the Seminar
Held in Lumbini, Nepal, March 2011



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Christoph Cüppers, Robert Mayer and
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Lumbini International Research Institute
P.O. Box 39
Bhairahawa, Dist. Rupandehi
NEPAL
E-mail: liri@mos.com.np

Cover illustration: Fig. 12a. Arrival of foreign envoys; riderless camel and animals aligned awaiting sacrifice; ritual tent and laceration, Panel II (see article Amy Heller)

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INTRODUCTION

When the subject of this conference was first mooted, one of the invitees expressed the concern that such an enterprise was hardly possible: not enough was known about the period to enable a viable seminar. By the time the conference had ended, even this doubter was converted, and was happy to admit that the period was indeed a worthwhile topic of study, and the conference a success. The inescapable reality is that even if our evidence is still at this stage somewhat fragmented, localised, or even hazy, the tectonic changes this period undoubtedly witnessed make it so significant that we simply cannot ignore it. Besides, hazy or fragmented evidence is not the same as no evidence, and we do indeed have plenty of suchevidence to mull over. But there are no grounds for complacency, and there is no doubt that tremendous uncertainties still persist. The areas of uncertainty are legion. Some are methodological: How do we date the various Dunhuang texts and other finds? How reliable are the various rock inscriptions? How should we interpret the various Chinese sources? Other questions are substantive: What exactly caused the Tibetan Empire to fall? What economic changes marked the period? Which ethnic identities and political subgroupings were significant? What impacts might there have been from global forces outside of Tibet? A particular sub-set of questions concern religion and culture: What relation did the burial tumulus tradition have with the later Bon? Exactly how and when did Tantric Buddhism become so popular? How did intellectual systems like Tibetan medicine and astrology develop in this period? Finally there are interpretive questions: should we envisage a cataclysmic change, or should we envisage change as process, with differential rates within different sub-systems of society? To such questions, numerous others could be added, and none of them have so far been conclusively answered.

Because the evidence is so imprecise and so open to interpretation, completely contradictory views presently prevail, even amongst scholars who might otherwise think alike. In such circumstances of general disagreement, the convenors thought it best to put very few conceptual constraints on the participants, other than that their contributions should bring something useful to the table. It seemed still too early in the debate on this most important of historical periods to be too prescriptive regarding frameworks or themes. Hence one of the convenors' original ideas, of focussing more narrowly on the very distinctive propagation of Buddhism in this period (nowadays nick-named the *bar-dar*), proved unsuitable at such an early stage.

Yet this creative chaos has born fruit, and out of the conference discussions, a number of promising threads were seen to emerge, including two that have the definite potential to break the impasse currently existing in our understandings by presenting entirely new data for analysis. Both of these might develop, over the next

few years, into important Tibetological sub-disciplines with a considerable duration ahead of them, and both depend, one way or another, upon China. First is the opening up of Tibet to serious scientific archaeology, which, despite current constraints and obstacles, will hopefully flourish eventually. Second is the growing awareness of a much greater quantity than was previously realised of contemporaneous or near contemporaneous Chinese sources on post-Imperial Tibet.

While three of the conference papers directly addressed these promising new avenues (Hazod, Heller, Horleman) others showed that there is still a very great deal that can be fruitfully gained by a finer analysis of more traditional sources. A few previously unknown or unread documents are still appearing (Karmay, Vitali), new views can still be taken and new conclusions drawn from already known documents (Blezer, Cantwell & Mayer, Dotson, Hill, Martin, Mathes, Schuh, Tanzin, Walter), and fresh contextualising perspectives can be explored (Iuchi, Meinert, Schuh, Szanto).

Henk **Blezer** offers a very valuable overview of some of the salient findings of his Three Pillars of Bon research program at Leiden, which is amongst the largest and most significant research projects so far ever conducted into Bon. One of the most important of his findings emerges from his following up the initial clue offered by Anne-Marie Blondeau into the importance of the rMa clan. Blezer showed with repeated examples that Bon lore and literature developed or were formatted in the post-Imperial period, but now he also presents strong indications that a remarkable proportion of this took shape under the specific influence of the rMa clan, who were highly conversant with Buddhism. Nevertheless, later Bon tradition erases this fact from their histories, in the cause of disguising its diachronic transformations.

Cathy **Cantwell** and Rob **Mayer's** paper is one of two that analyse myth in early indigenous literature, and the manner in which its traditional patterns of usage continued to impact on Buddhist era texts. Their focus is the Dunhuang textual sources for Padmasambhava. Extending a theme begun in their contribution to Samten Karmay's festschrift,[1] they point out that all three proven Dunhuang sources for Padmasambhava—PT44, IOLTibJ321 and PT307—are self-evidently ritual texts, and that their narrative passages are in the cases of PT44 and PT307 Buddhist appropriations of the traditional ritual device of *smrang* or *rabs*, or in the case of IOLTibJ321, ritual verses of praise later appropriated by Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer for his Zangs gling ma hagiography. Once such ritual contexts are systematically analysed, the texts yield historical conclusions often diametrically opposed to prevailing suppositions about them. Likewise, they show that the dyadic narrative

1 Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer, "Enduring myths: smrang, rabs and ritual in the Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava", in *Tibetan Studies in Honor of Samten Karmay*, ed, Pommaret & Achard, Dharamsala 2009.

myths of Padmasambhava's 'womb' and 'miraculous' births take on an altogether different significance, once their embeddedness in tantric ritual is understood and analysed.

Brandon **Dotson's** contribution is the second paper looking at myths in early literature. It is an exploratory attempt to analyse and classify different genres and types within such myths. They occur very widely within early indigenous Tibetan literature, yet they function far beyond their mere narrative content, in addition providing complex internal conceptual and ritual structuring that is no longer very easy to understand. Looking at three different sources, the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the apocryphal Buddhist text the "History of the Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*), and a document appended to the *Dba' bzhed* narrating a debate between advocates of Buddhist and Bon burial rites called the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*, all of which make structural use of myth, Dotson makes a distinction between what he terms the 'ritual antecedent tales' and the 'catalogue of ritual antecedents', and also between 'antecedent tales' and 'charter myths'. He raises the question of the relationship between such old indigenous forms and later literature, with especial focus on their transformations.

Guntram **Hazod**'s article is one of two that addresses the exciting new field of Tibetan archaeology, and builds on his pioneering expertise in the Tibetan tumulus tradition, the elaborate but still little-understood burial cult that prevailed between the 4th and 10th centuries. Its terminus came with the plundering of the venerated royal tombs in the civil strife of the 9th and 10th centuries, a trauma interpreted by Tibetans as emblematic of the lawlessness and decline of their times. Hazod presents the account of the plundering from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, analysing it within the context of other sources of knowledge, to address questions of the local historical milieu in the period concerned, the identities of the clans who did the plundering, some characteristics of the Imperial funeral tradition, and questions of chronology.

Amy **Heller**'s presentation is the other of the two addressing the new archaeology. She brings us many illustrations from the tumuli excavated at Dulan in Amdo, notably the painted coffin panels, and a discussion of current theories about these still mysterious artefacts. These extraordinarily important discoveries are still in the process of publication by Chinese and Tibetan archaeologists who have authorized Heller to consult their data. She is able for example to confirm a Sogdian cultural influence in several of the artefacts and details of the painting, and highlight repeated themes that are found in different coffin panels, as well as evidence of animal sacrifice. Her illustrations bring home to us the remarkably high level of craftsmanship and artistic expertise found even in these comparatively modest tumuli.

Nathan **Hill** offers a meticulous and exhaustive analysis of the terms 'come as lord' (*rjer gshegs*) and 'the black headed' (*mgo nag*). These are both components of a larger mythic formula 'he came from among the gods of heaven to the narrow earth to be ruler of men (the black headed) and owner of yaks (the bent)'. The term *mgo nag*, 'black-headed,' is often found in Old Tibetan (and later) texts, to describe the Tibetan human population. Hill shows how in every known occurrence, this brief term refers synechdocally to the myth of the descent of the Tibetan Emperor from the heavens to take loving charge of the 'black-headed' Tibetan peoples. A classificatory differentiation between the god-like Emperor, his 'black-headed' human subjects, and the 'bent and maned' yaks and animals is in all cases being expressed, so that the term 'black-headed' cannot be taken simply as a synonym for *myi* ('man'), but must also be understood to refer in addition to humans *qua* subjects of the emperor. Nor is such a usage unique to Tibet: 'black-headed' (*ṣalmāt qaqqadi*) for example occurs in the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary as 'a poetic term for mankind as a totality, created by the gods and kept in safe pastures by the kings.' Similar usages are found in Tangut and Chinese sources.

Bianca **Horleman**'s contribution opens the doors to a much greater quantity of contemporaneous Chinese sources than has so far been widely known about or utilised. She offers us a comprehensive and analytic bibliographic essay on the surprisingly substantial quantities of T'ang dynasty sources on Tibet, including internet-based research tools, which have now become available. In addition, she presents a select bibliography of contemporary Chinese scholarship on the Tibetan empire, as well as many items of Western scholarship that deal with the T'ang in a manner potentially useful to the study of early Tibet. Her bibliography is highly analytic, enabling the reader to see at a glance what topics each item deals with, and she also offers English translations for the Chinese titles.

Maho **Iuchi** opens up a very promising new approach to understanding the post-Imperial period by focusing on a specific location and its local histories. This location is 'Dan ma or 'Dan khog in Khams, which was where Atiśa's three main disciples, Khu ston Brtson 'grus g-yung drung (1011-1075), Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, and 'Brom ston pa Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1005-1064), gained most of their education prior to Atiśa's arrival in Tibet. 'Dan ma was thus very influential in the establishment of the Bka' gdams school. For example 'Brom ston, its most important founder, spent a full twenty years there, studying mainly under Se btsun Dbang phyug gzhon nu and secondarily under the Indian Smṛtijñānakīrti. Se btsun himself was famous for his visit to India, and 'Brom ston learned Madhyamaka, the Old Tantras, and other teachings from him. Se btsun was a monk, who had received the *smad 'dul* vinaya ordination from Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan, who in turn had been ordained directly by Dgongs pa rab gsal himself.

Samten **Karmay** presents a previously unknown *rnam thar* of Lha Bla ma Ye shes ’od recently discovered at the gNas bcu lha khang in Drepung Monastery, simply entitled *Lha bla ma ye shes ’od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*. Although the text seems to be cobbled together from assorted fragments, its author clearly did have access to some important old documents. Karmay presents a summary of its contents, which include chronology, Lha bla ma’s encounters with ‘bad’ teachers, his two wives and three children, his royal genealogy, how the Bon religion once prevailed in Zhang zhung, his ordination as a monk in later life, and some descriptions of Rin chen bzang po. This *rnam thar* also cites, without acknowledgement, from Ye shes ’od’s already well-known Decrees. The founding of mTho gling temple in 996 is described, as well as Ri Cho ’phrul rmad byung temple, and its decoration by Kashmiri artists. The passing of various laws is also described. The colophon mentions one Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, a resident of mTho gling, but the text itself also references much later figures such as Sapan (1182-1251) and ’Gro mgon Chos rgyal ’phags pa (1235-1280).

Dan **Martin** strives to illuminate the little-known and comparatively short-lived Highland Vinaya lineage (*Stod ’Dul*), by reconstructing from its two surviving fragments a complete12th century text by Zhing mo che ba Byang chub seng ge, a champion of the *Stod ’Dul*. There seems little doubt that monastic ordinations occurred in Western Tibet before the return of the ordained men of Central Tibet from their ordinations in Amdo, Rin chen bzang po himself being a prime example. Varying uses of the term *Stod ’Dul* are disambiguated however, and Rin chen bzang po’s ordination did not count as *Stod ’Dul* by a strict definition, which should include only those lineages descending directly from Dharmapāla, whose lineage came between 997 and 1024, a bit later than the Lowland Vinaya (*sMad ‘Dul*). While clearly championing his own *Stod ’Dul* over all others, Zhing mo che ba was not so much concerned about *vinaya* ordination lineages *per se*, but rather in their traditions of explicating the major *vinaya* texts. Thus it is clear that vinaya studies were already in his day sufficiently developed to create complex differences of interpretation, with all their resultant debates.

Klaus-Dieter **Mathes** revisits the issue of Sa skya Paṇḍita’s critique of bKa’ brgyud Mahāmudrā, already the subject of debate in the 1980’s between David Jackson and Michael Broido, but which Mathes can now approach with a quantity of decisive new evidence from Indian texts. Sa skya Paṇḍita feared that during the *bar dar*, influences from Chinese Ch’an had got mixed with genuine Indian Mahāmudrā, leading to what he saw as a mistaken belief that Mahāmudrā could be achieved simply through guru devotion and the suspension of discursive thought, but without the full gamut of prior Tantric practices and empowerments. While it is true that the earlier rNying ma master Vimalamitra had held such views, and he might have been open to Chinese influences, Mathes can now show that a range of Sanskrit texts by respected scholarly authors also supported this position, and they cannot have been Chinese-influenced.

Carmen **Meinert** opens an extremely interesting new perspective through a comparative study of the reception of Indian *ābhicāraka* rituals in China and Tibet, that is, tantric rites using violent imagery. She makes special reference to the *Guhyasamājatantra*, which occurs both in Chinese and Tibetan, including a Tibetan witness from Dunhuang. She shows how the Chinese translation of the *Guhyasamājatantra* by Dānapāla under the auspices of the Northern Song was censored: it was intended forthe Imperial use of Buddhism for diplomatic purposes, so that translators like Dānapāla were compelled to produce texts 'tactful' for diplomatic purposes, with scant regard for the soteriological needs of China's Buddhists. Thus the soteriological symbolism of *abhicāra* was never realised in China, and instead it was eventually taken up as a purely worldly black magic. By contrast, Tibetan translation, especially during the *bar dar* and at remote locations like Dunhuang, was free of such constraints, and *abhicāra* became fully integrated into soteriological practice, notwithstanding occasional abuse.

Dieter **Schuh** contributes a study of great significance for our understanding of the origin of divination practices in Tibet as well as the nature of religious belief in early Tibet. The study begins with an overview of the eventual Dge-lugs-pa recognition of these methods as acceptable to Buddhism. He then analyzes illustrations in Dunhuang manuscripts that demonstrate their relationship with the later, established teachings on *nag rtsis*. We thus gain for the first time a diachronic view of popular methods by which Tibetans have long dealt with uncertainty. The material from Dunhuang extends this tradition to a period likely immediately after the Btsan-pos. Schuh's thorough knowledge of these subjects and the literature around them allows him to go even further, however. By presenting extensive lists of texts asserted to have been composed both during and after the Empire, Schuh provides the background for answering an important question most others have not even thought to ask: *Why* have these methods for dealing with troublesome spirits, etc., been so popular among the Tibetan peoples for so long? The answer lies in part in a mass of texts mentioned in standard Tibetan Buddhist sources. The very presence of these lists is a basis for the acceptance of their practices as 'Buddhist' by, in particular, the 5th Dalai Lama and Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. If only some of these titles existed at such an early time as the 9th-10th centuries, the universal acceptance of their practices in Tibet is easily explained. Just as significantly, Schuh concludes that these texts may be evidence of a cultural alternative to Buddhism which arose after the fall of the Imperium. The author has provided us with both a vision and a challenge that we must take up if we are to understand Tibetan culture and religion in the Bar dar.

Péter-Dániel **Szántó** likewise opens up new vistas with extremely interesting contextualising and comparative observations. He points out firstly that the Pāla Empire, Nepal and Kashmir were themselves experiencing a 'Dark Age' of political collapse that co-incided almost perfectly with the Tibetan 'Time of Fragments', and

with many of the same symptoms, notably the cutting off of state patronage to Buddhism, and a dearth of surviving historical sources. Just as in Tibet this period saw the dramatic proliferation of tantric literature, so did it also in India and the Pāla Empire. Not only that, but the modes of composition of such tantras in India and Tibet could be strikingly similar: in both cases, fresh composition of ostensibly scriptural tantras could take a predominantly anthological mode, creating new sacred scriptures by weaving together passages from a range of existing texts, both anonymous (scriptural), and authored (commentarial). In Bengal, for example, the *Sampuṭatantra* was anthologised using fragments from a range of existing texts, which are listed in considerable detail.

Lopon P. Ogyan **Tanzin** is one of the leading *sngags pa* students of the late Dudjom Rinpoche. Here he presents the six greatnesses of the Early Translations (*snga-'gyur*) as formulated by the great scholar Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (11th century). These are: the greatness of the patrons; the greatness of the scholars; the greatness of the translators; the greatness of the places where the translations were made; the greatness of the doctrines translated; and, the greatness of the offerings made as a support for requesting the doctrine. While Rong zom Mahāpaṇḍita properly belonged to the later period of Buddhism's diffusion in Tibet (*phyi-dar*), and hence formulated these six greatnesses after the period concerned as a means to distinguish the Early from the New Translations (*gsar-'gyur*), they have remained an important element in the self-presentation of the *rNying-ma-pas* to this day. Nevertheless, despite various reports to the contrary, their actual provenance is in fact unclear, since they cannot be found amongst Rong zom's extant works, not even in his *dKon-mchog 'grel*, as claimed for example by Dorje and Kapstein (1991). It seems more likely then that they simply circulated amongst rNying ma lamas, from at least as early as Longchenpa's time, in the form of a list linked by oral tradition to Rong zom.

Roberto **Vitali** focuses very fruitfully on post-Imperial Khams, and like Maho Iuchi, finds strong evidence for the unbroken continuation of religious culture in that region throughout the period. He looks first at the political transformations concomitant with the fall of Empire in the Khams regions, and then at the consequences of this for religion. His hitherto untapped sources include materials preserved in the writings of Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang norbu and Karma Chags med, as well as Dunhuang materials such as PT 849. He presents rare evidence for the emergence of the four Eastern regional kingdoms known as the *ka bzhi*, and their relation to the territories previously coming under Yum brtan or 'Od srung. As well as elucidating the political changes, he is able to show that despite stereotypical claims to the contrary, religious life in fact continued effectively enough in the Eastern regions after the fall of empire to provide a basis for later revival, and that evidence even exists for some debate between competing interpretations of Buddhism, and for the study of sophisticated topics such as Abhidharma (cf. Dan Martin's paper on vinaya disputes in far-off West Tibet).

Michael Walter presents the first part of a detailed analysis of PT016/IO751, the *'De ga G.yu Tshal* document'. While this first part focuses on its language and culture, the next part will present a translation with commentary. The only significant political document often believed to date from the reign of Ral pa can (r. 815-836), Walter subjects PT016 to detailed paleographic analysis, followed by analysis of its nominal/adjectival vocabulary, verbal constructions, postpositional terms, and adverbials. Walter's meticulously detailed stylistic analysis then identifies PT016 as a pastiche, redacted from separate peices written at different times.He concludes it did not after all achieve its finished form during the reign of Ral pa can, nor is the work as we have it a simple transcription of Imperial-period documents. Rather, it seems to have been created to give models to Sanghas when offering confession rites at courts and to important officials in a post-Imperial world. Thus we obtain a picture of this pastiche as an early 'bar dar' document, the product of an independent Sangha preparing for service to rulers whose legitimacy was based on the aura of the last long-reigning *btsan po*.

REPRESENTATIONS OF PADMASAMBHAVA IN EARLY POST-IMPERIAL TIBET

CATHY CANTWELL AND ROB MAYER

Introduction

When did the person of Padmasambhava first become incorporated into tantric ritual, and when did the exalted status for which he is now so well known first become evident? For Tibetan tradition, the answers are simple. Padmasambhava was a peerless guru with the vidyādhara's control over lifespan, who became revered in Tibet after the emperor Khri Srong de'u btsan (r. 755/6-797) invited him there in the late eighth century—by which time he had already been a living legend in India for many centuries. Modern academics are of course denied such beautiful and easy answers. In general, we are permitted to accept as valid evidence far less data than traditional Tibetan historians, and in few places is this felt more acutely than in the history of Padmasambhava. In the usages of modern scholarship, the admissible historical evidence for the person of Padmasambhava, or even for his representations, is very slight indeed. Fortunately however, following the digitisation of the Dunhuang texts over the last decade, we have recently seen a small augmentation of the available early evidence for the representations of the great guru in tantric literature, even if not for the enigmatic master himself. Part of this augmentation has come from the discovery of a new Dunhuang textual source, and part from a more intensive analysis of already known Dunhuang textual sources. However, we are not convinced that the implications of the new source have so far been fully appreciated, nor that the bigger picture as it should now stand has been properly assessed. In this paper we present a more thorough interrogation of the new source of evidence, together with a further investigation of the already known sources, to arrive at a more complete depiction of what we can now know about the prehistory of Padmasambhava's early representation, if we put all the available evidence together. Some of our thinking on Padmasambhava in the Dunhuang sources has already been published elsewhere, so that we will only recapitulate it briefly here, while other material will be presented here for the first time.[1]

The most convenient summary of how the historical Padmasambhava looked to modern scholarship before the digitisation and wider dissemination of the Dunhuang

1 See Cantwell, C. and R. Mayer. 2008b; 2009; 2010; 2012.

texts comes from Matthew Kapstein.[2] Writing in 2000, the only admissible evidence then available to him was fourfold:

i) The early historical text, the *Testament of Ba*,[3] which presents Padmasambhava visiting Tibet.
ii) The 10th century Dunhuang text PT44, which narrates Padmasambhava bringing the Vajrakīlaya[4] tradition to Tibet.
iii An early text attributed to Padmasambhava, the *Man ngag lta 'phreng*, and a commentary on it by the eleventh century rNying ma sage, Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (exact dates unknown).
iv) The *gter ma*s of Nyang ral (1124-1192) and Guru Chos dbang (1212-1270), which presented fully-fledged apotheoses of Padmasambhava as a fully-enlightened Buddha.

Based on this evidence, Kapstein concluded that:

i) The *Testament of Ba* shows Padmasambhava quite likely did visit Tibet during Khri Srong de'u btsan's reign.
ii) PT44 indicates followers of his tantric teachings were active in post-Imperial Tibet.
iii) Rong zom's commentary and the few Dunhuang references show that the Padmasambhava cult began its ascent during the 'time of fragments', between the end of Empire in the mid- 9th century and the start of the *gsar ma* period in the late 10th century.
iv) Nyang ral and Chos dbang's treasure texts suggest the most massive elaboration of Padmasambhava's cult developed from the 12th century.[5]

Since Kapstein published that in 2000, there have been two further developments. Firstly, a new Dunhuang source mentioning Padmasambhava, PT307, was felicitously discovered by Jacob Dalton in the course of his cataloguing work for the British

2 Much of the most important work on Padmasambhava was done at the EPHE in Paris over many years by Anne-Marie Blondeau, who has now been succeeded by another scholar with an interest in Padmasambhava, Matthew Kapstein. See Kapstein 2000: 155-160.

3 This famous early history comes in various different redactions, and also has different spellings, notably *dBa' bzhed, sBa bzhed,* and *rBa bzhed*.

4 While the correct Sanskrit name is *Vajrakīla*, the tradition acquired a new take on its Indic name in Tibet: from the tenth century Dunhuang texts until today, Tibetans have normatively and consistently referred to it in transliteration as *Vajrakīlaya*, and only rarely as *Vajrakīla*. Even that arch Indophile and Sanskritist, the famous Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), used the form *Vajrakīlaya* rather than *Vajrakīla* in his seminal edition of the short *phur pa* tantra that was included in the Kanjur (*rDo rje phur pa rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi dum bu*; all editions we have been able to consult are agreed on *Vajrakīlaya*). Hence, when referring to the greatly expanded Tibetan branch of the tradition as opposed to the smaller Indian tradition, one may advisedly employ the Tibetan name Vajrakīlaya, rather than the Indian name Vajrakīla.

5 Kapstein, op.cit. p. 157

Library. Dalton subsequently published an article on PT307 and on another Dunhung text, TibJ644.[6] Secondly, the present authors have completed a much more detailed analysis than has hitherto been attempted of the evidence for Padmasambhava from the Dunhuang text IOLTibJ 321, looking at it more carefully than Eastman's short note from the 1980s, Dalton's brief summary in 2004, or van Schaik's small blog entry in 2007 (Cantwell and Mayer 2012: 87-98). It is largely these two sources of evidence that will inform the present article, together with a reassessment of the already well-known sources PT44 and the *Testament of Ba*.

However, we must first digress upon a quick disambiguation. Those who have read his work will be aware that Jacob Dalton had initially hoped that he had found two new Dunhuang references to Padmasambhava, not merely one, and proposed a further text, IOLTibJ644, as a description of Padmasambhava in the Asura Cave at Pharping (Dalton, op.cit). Unfortunately however, as Dalton himself points out, IOLTibJ644 nowhere mentions Padmasambhava by name, and as we have shown elsewhere, there are further grounds to doubt that it is necessarily referring to Padmasambhava at all. For present purposes, we are best advised to leave it aside, pending further investigation.[7]

So what can the new and fully admissible evidence tell us that is different from what Kapstein wrote in 2000? It is a tribute to the discipline of his historical reasoning, and the restraint with which his analysis neither exceeded nor underrated the scanty evidence, that the advances we can now report consist more of filling in additional details, rather than revising his basic outlines. Kapstein wisely attempted no definite dates for any particular aspect of the Padmasambhava cult, which he portrayed as a gradual process developing throughout the post-imperial period, coming to some sort

6 See Dalton 2004.

7 For a discussion of these issues, see Mayer 2007. Dalton was right in saying that the relevant passage does occur within the general type of literature within which one might expect to find mentions of Padmasambhava, since it deals with the *vidyādhara* levels of the different *yāna*s as later enumerated by the rNying ma pa. Yet the actual passage in question pertains specifically to a *vidyādhara* level attained through Kriyā tantra known as the *sa la gnas pa'i rig 'dzin*, and is of a type found in other Kriyā tantra passages. Its themes of Vajrapāṇi, asura caves, miraculously-linked divine rivers flowing between Meru and the *asura*'s and *nāga*'s miraculous underground of *pātāla*, and magic sacraments of immortality, were popular in Kriyā tantras and other Indic literatures of that time, appearing also in Chinese texts. So this passage, expounding Kriyātantra terminology and nowhere mentioning Padmasambhava, might simply be a generic Kriyā tantra description, and might have nothing to do with Padmasambhava at all. Dalton's identification was based on the assumption that the mention of an asura cave and the magic springs of Aśvakarṇa (a mountain or range in Abhidharma cosmology) should most likely signify Padmasambhava, since the Padmasambhava narratives in the *dBa' bzhed* and in PT44 have similar motifs. But there remains some risk that his analysis did not take sufficient account of the fact that these types of motifs are widespread in Buddhist Kriyā tantras both Indic and Chinese, as also in Hindu purāṇic literature, for example, so that until a better analysis is achieved, the passage cannot be reliably taken as evidence for Padmasambhava.

of culmination with Nyang ral three centuries later. What is new is that we now have much stronger evidence that reverence for Padmasambhava, his incorporation into ritual, and—it seems—even his apotheosis, began closer to the beginning of the lengthy time frame Kapstein suggested than to its end. Our new evidence suggests that Padmasambhava already figured in religious myth and ritual, and was probably even seen as the enlightened source of tantric scriptures, as many as two hundred years before Nyang ral. In other words, when portraying Padmasambhava in his famous hagiographical and historical writings, it seems clear that Nyang ral was developing existent themes, as much as inventing new ones. With the benefit of hindsight, such an early inclusion of Padmasambhava in myth and ritual does not really seem surprising: as the figure *par excellence* who tamed and controlled all indigenous deities in the name of Buddhism, Padmasambhava is by the same token the figure who made it safe for converts to abandon their ancestral gods without fear of divine retribution. If Padmasambhava had not existed, it could be that some one performing a similar role might have to have been introduced. An important proviso is that we have not yet ascertained if the new evidence bears witness to a widespread cult of Padma in the tenth century, or something far narrower, followed only by a few. This is because the evidence currently available suggests two differing views of Padma, even within the comparatively narrow confines of the early proto-rNying ma tantric sources:

- Firstly, in the context of the possibly early- or mid-10th century[8] rDzogs chen-oriented *bSam gtan mig sgron* of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes, he is cited as a great teacher and even mythologised, but no more so than his peers such as Vimalamitra, and there is no sign of his integration into ritual (although that might not be expected in a text of this genre).
- Secondly, in the Mahāyoga manuscripts from Dunhuang that were probably calligraphed in late tenth century but which might or might not represent significantly earlier compositions, he is mythologised, incorporated into ritual, and elevated above his peers, even apotheosized. The available versions of the *Testament of Ba* seem broadly to concur with this.

Jacob Dalton has in the last five years emerged as a much cited interpreter of the early rNying ma pa, and is widely renowned as a highly enterprising, thought-provoking and imaginative scholar. He has recognised, as many others such as Blondeau and Kapstein did before him, that there is real evidence for Padmasambhava from the 10th century or earlier. However, as we have pointed out elsewhere, Dalton's work in this instance (Dalton 2004) reproduces or even multiplies the oversight of some previous scholarship in not taking adequate account of the domain of ritual, including the quite explicitly ritual functions of much of the Dunhaung material relating to

8 The dates of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes are still a matter for debate. We currently prefer the later dates as supported by Karmay 1988: 101.

Padmasambhava. As a result, he did not notice the extraordinary continuities that these Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava have with contemporary Padmasambhava ritual—yet it is these continuities in the realm of ritual which in fact constitute amongst their most important data for historians.[9] One cannot fully understand the historical significance of these texts without understanding two things: (i) that they themselves quite explicitly pertain to ritual, and (ii) the striking way in which their narratives and themes persist into the later ritual tradition, even into many of its very most popular modern expressions. Dalton did not really appreciate either of these two points. By approaching them once again merely as historical narratives rather than as texts from the domain of ritual, thus failing to notice their remarkably close continuities with later and contemporary Mahāyoga ritual, Dalton arrived at some conclusions that we believe are inaccurate. In particular, he largely misconstrued the evidence to support his central yet flawed theses, that these specific Dunhuang texts were fundamentally discontinuous in narrative structure with the later Tibetan tradition, and that in them, Padmasambhava was not portrayed as a uniquely important figure. While we entirely agree with him that Padmasambhava's role expanded over time, we do not agree with him that the two texts under consideration, PT307 and IOLTibJ321, are discontinuous in narrative structure with the later tradition, nor that they show Padmasambhava in anything other than an already thoroughly glorified ritual role. It could be argued that some of the more historically oriented modern scholarship on tantrism has perhaps been insufficiently informed by an appreciation of ritual practice, including some of the previous work on the Dunhuang sources.[10] The potential ritual evidence for the Padmasambhava cult in the Dunhuang sources is in fact considerably more significant than has so far been recognised, and also suggestive of rather different historical conclusions than have hitherto been drawn.

9 See Cantwell and Mayer 2009: 296ff.

10 An influential strand within anthropology, a primary discipline for the understanding of ritual, has from the outset taken as fundamental to its methodology the minute study of ritual performances and the practice of participant observation. Anyone who was really familiar with contemporary popular rNying ma ritual would swiftly recognise the remarkable and unmistakeable continuities between the Dunhuang Padmasambhava texts and modern ritual—yet it took modern scholarship decades to make this connection, preoccupied as it was with the historiographic record. Tantrism is primarily a ritual system, and ritual is essentially performative in nature, so that much of the most significant data about tantrism is recorded largely in its ritual record. It follows that an appreciation of tantrism's performative aspects is indispensable to its understanding. Much the same can also be said about Mahāyāna Buddhism, so that Paul Harrison of Stanford University learned the *Diamond Sūtra* by heart and recited it daily to introduce into his philological research on that text a much needed performative understanding. In similar spirit, philologists and historians of tantrism will benefit if they study ritual manuals in great detail, attend occasional performances of rituals, and perhaps even participate in them now and again to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding.

IOLTibJ321, the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* and its commentary

Let us begin with IOLTibJ321. One of the most remarkable finds from Dunhuang, this manuscript in eighty-five folios[11] comprises a complete rNying ma Mahāyoga tantra embedded within its commentary, further embellished with many marginal notes. The tantra is a famous one, still a mainstay of the rNying ma canon and found also in several Kanjurs, called *The Noble Noose of Methods, a Lotus Garland Synopsis* (*'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng gi don bsdus pa*). We have been editing and studying the tantra and its commentary since 2006 (see Cantwell and Mayer 2012). Current palaeographical opinion locates the Dunhuang manuscript to the latter half of the tenth century, although our critical edition can demonstrate with reasonable certainty that an archetypal ancestor was older than the Dunhuang text by two copyings at the very least (Cantwell and Mayer, in press: 32-33).[12]

The Dunhuang manuscript mentions Padmasambhava four times: once in the marginal notes at the beginning, twice in the marginal notes near the end, and once within the main text of the commentary itself, also near the end. The references are somewhat enigmatic, and we have published on them at greater length elsewhere (Cantwell and Mayer 2012:91-98), so here we will only review our findings in brief. Eastman, in the 1980s, was the first to look at these references, and tentatively suggested they might be presenting Padmasambhava as the human author of the commentary. Dalton and van Schaik follow him in taking much the same line, albeit more strongly.[13] However, despite the difficulty of the materials and the complicated way in which the root text, commentary and marginal notes cross-reference one

11 The folios are numbered up to 84, but there is an extra unnumbered folio so there are eighty-five folios in total.

12 There is evidence relating to the actual document—the anomolies in chapter numbering and in the presentation of marginal notes—which show the manuscript must have been copied more than once. There is also evidence from the textual content. The Dunhuang ms. already has numerous scribal errors, some of them shared indicatively with specific strands of the extant transmission, others not. The density and layering of such scribal errors in the Dunhuang ms. indicate some transmissional distance from the archetype, but of course it is in most cases logically unsound to attempt any but the most trivial temporal conclusions purely from transmissional distance; two copyings could occur in a month, or over a century or more. The very old local Kanjurs or Kanjur fragments of Hemis and Bathang provided key testimony to our stemmatic analysis of the root text, as did the Tawang O rgyan gling Kanjur of 1699, and the three South Central Tibetan NGB editions of gTing skyes, Rig 'dzin and Kathmandu. See Cantwell and Mayer, 2012.

13 Eastman himself expressed some caution, finally concluding, "It *appears*... that we have one of the few surviving works of Padmasambhava" (1983: 50, our emphasis). In their catalogue, Dalton and van Schaik, however, simply list Padmasambhava as the author of IOL TibJ 321, with no equivocations. See Dalton and van Schaik 2006: 51, or the online version of the catalogue at http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL Tib J 321. This unequivocal assertion of authorship by Padmasambhava then continues throughout Dalton and van Schaik's further individual writings on IOLTibJ321 as well.

another, none of the above scholars could afford the leisure to study the text in much depth or for very long, and none have written more than a few pages on it on any one occasion. After a much more laborious study, it now appears altogether uncertain that Padmasambhava is being represented as the human author of the commentary. Rather, there is a distinct emphasis on portraying him as a sublime realised being with exceptional access to the tathāgata's secret teachings, and quite possibly even as the source of the root tantra itself.

The references the manuscript makes to Padmasambhava are not entirely clear and unambiguous, since they assume the reader already knows such information, but what is clear and unambiguous is that these are references to an exceptional, mythologized being, and not to an ordinary human teacher. At its end, the main text of the commentary lavishly praises Padmasambhava as *Padma rgyal po*, the 'Lotus King', in verses which the accompanying marginal notes explain are being addressed by Śāntigarbha to Padmasambhava. It is fascinating that these verses use a precise form of laudatory words picked up two centuries later by Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer and the wider hagiographical tradition in their own praises of Padmasambhava, and Nyang ral again specifically links these particular words to *Padma rgyal po*, a form which still remains canonical as one of the famous *Eight Aspects of Guru Rinpoche* (*gu ru mtshan brgyad*). [See figure 1][14]

Final Verse of the Commentary to the *'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng gi don bsdus pa* (Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 321 [Ms], f.84r; *bsTan 'gyur*: Golden [Gt] *rgyud 'grel* Bu, 78321, Peking [Qt] *rgyud 'grel* Bu, 129b, sNar thang [Nt] *rgyud* Bu 228)	Nyang ral, Nyi ma 'od zer *Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba, rnam thar zangs gling ma* (based primarily on the Kathmandu National Archives manuscript in *dbu med* (IMG_1670+1671, reel E2703/10, f.16r.5-16v.1). [14]
།དངོས་གྲུབ་མཆོག་བརྙེས་ཡ་མཚན་ཆེན་པོ་ཡིས་[Ms ༡]	དངོས་གྲུབ་མཆོག་བརྙེས་ཡ་མཚན་ཆེན་པོའི་སྐུ།

14 Lewis Doney of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, has worked on critically editing Nyang ral's Guru Padma hagiography. He argues convincingly that the earliest and historically most influential recension is that represented by two manuscripts in the National Archives in Kathmandu and two manuscripts from Bhutan, which he classifies as ZL3. The version of ZL3 used here is Lewis Doney's discovery in the Kathmandu National Archives. We have emended *rtog* in line 2 to *rtogs*, found in all the other witnesses of ZL3. The Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo version (Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, Kyichu Monastery, 1976, Volume Ka: 25), which has more recently become the most widely used version, incorporates later material. It gives a variant second line (*rtogs ba bla med mchog tu gyur pa yis/*) for this verse.

།འཇིག་རྟེན་མ་འགྱུར་[Ms ངམ་གྱུར་] པདྨའི་ [Ms པད་མ་] རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡིས་	རྟོགས་པ་བླ་མེད་པདྨ་རྒྱལ་པོའི་སྐུ།
།དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་མན་ངག་གསང་ཆེན་རྣམས།	དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་མན་ངག་གསང་ཆེན་རྣམས།
།ཀློང་ [Ms ཀླུང་] ནས་བཀྲོལ་མཛད་དེ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།	ཀློང་ནས་གྲོལ་མཛད་ཁྱེད་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་བསྟོད།
(I) prostrate to he who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder,	(I) prostrate to and praise the (buddha) body who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder,
Padma('i) rGyal po [The Lotus King] (who) is not worldly;	the body of incomparable realisation, Padma rGyal po [The Lotus King];
(he who) unravels from the expanse	you (who) unravel from the expanse
the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions.	the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions.

The verses say that Sam bha ba is "*he who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder, Padma rGyal po* [*The Lotus King*] (*who*) *is not worldly;* (*he who*) *unravels from the expanse the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions*". The marginal notes attached here are slightly ambiguous, explaining that after examination, Śāntigarbha finds either Padmasambhava himself, or his teachings, flawless, and is praising him.[15] Right at the start of the text, the marginal notes already told us that while the Buddha has condensed [the meanings] of the root text (*'bu tas bsdus*), it was Sambhava who produced or made [them] (*sam ba bhas byas*)—a similar meaning to Śāntigarbha's praise of him here for unravelling the secret great pith instructions of the *tathāgata* from the expanse. Finally, right at the end of the root tantra, a marginal note might possibly explain that what has gone before, namely the speech of the tantra, was revealed by Padmasambhava without any personal fabrication or *rang gzo*, and there follows an explanation of how, when a noble being speaks with pure awareness, the resulting utterance is tantra.[16] Thus, Padmasambhava is closely involved with the

15 *slobs dpon shan ting gar bas brtags nas ma nor nas/ sam ba bha la stod pa 'o/* (f.84r.5)

16 (*pad ma sam ba bhas rang gz[or?] byas pa ma yin bar ston*, 83v.6). We presently think that since this comment follows the end of the root text, it might be commenting on Padmasambhava's relation to the root text rather than merely the final line in the text relating to the maṇḍala dissolution, especially since the commentary goes on to link the final teaching on natural emanation and reabsorption to the production of the tantra (*given this natural emergence out of sameness, when, with pure awareness, the noble being speaks, the sound is tantra...).* So it may be suggesting that the speech of the tantra is naturally emanated rather than idiosyncratically produced by Padmasambhava, although it has to be said that the comment is certainly not unambiguous, and might well refer to the process of natural emanation and reabsorption of the maṇḍala deities.

Buddha's original teaching of the tantra, in terms that go some distance to making him sound like a treasure revealer of some kind.[17] This has caused us to speculate that the name 'Padma' in the titles of the texts might conceivably be considered to refer to Padmasambhava; yet, if such an interpretation is in fact intended by the commentary (let alone the root text), it is certainly never stated explicitly.

Next we should look at Śāntigarbha, [See figure 2] the one who utters the praise. Who is he? Dalton begins his discussion by saying that rather little is known about Śāntigarbha, and then concludes that his uttering the praise here in IOLTibJ321 indicates how comparatively insignficant Padmasambhava must have been at that time: for had Padmasambhava been as significant then as now, it would not be appropriate for someone as inconsequential as Śāntigarbha to praise him. Dalton sums up his thinking in the following words: 'From the perspective of the later Tibetan tradition, it is remarkable that the opinion of a relatively insignificant figure like Śāntigarbha would have any relevance for one with the stature of Padmasambhava' (Dalton 2004: 768). This is surely one of those junctures at which Dalton has not related the Dunhuang text to its Mahāyoga ritual context, for in Mahāyoga myth and ritual, in what Dalton is referring to here as 'the later Tibetan tradition', Śāntigarbha is a very major name indeed, and not in any way relatively insignificant, precisely because he is considered in much of the hagiographical and ritual literature as one of Padmasambhava's most important tantric gurus, as well as one of his closest spiritual colleagues. [See figure 3] A conclusion Dalton should have drawn is that these well-known contemporary structures of Mahāyoga narrative and ritual connecting Padmasambhava so closely with Śāntigarbha show interesting signs of already being adumbrated in some way in the Dunhuang texts, and this possibility needs further investigating. It should also be pointed out that if Śāntigarbha is his guru, or spiritual colleague of any sort, Padmasambhava being lavishly praised by him is not at all anomalous in the way Dalton suggests. In Mahāyoga thinking, even the greatest of gurus must of necessity have their own gurus, and gurus are always prone to praise their best disciples, especially if, as might be the implication here, the student's realisation greatly exceeds that of the guru. Alternatively, Śāntigarbha might simply be praising Padmasambhava as a spiritual colleague. But which ever way one looks at it, we believe Dalton cannot be right in describing Śāntigarbha as relatively insignificant, and if only Dalton had studied the ritual record as well as the historiographical

17 The principle of treasure revelation was quite probably known in Tibet at the time. The Tibetan version of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra*, as cited by Kamalaśila in his *Bhavanākrama*, has the revelation of treasure of this type as a main theme (the Chinese version is different and does not). It explains that the Buddha is the one who conceals the treasure scriptures, while the treasure revealer is a layman who has had the teaching imprinted on his mind in a previous life by the Buddha, and who in the future life is reawakened to them by encountering a reminder of them in a buried casket guarded by spirits. See Paul Harrison 1990, especially Chapter 13. References to treasure also occur in the Kriyā and Yogatantra genres, several texts from which were translated in the early period.

record, surely he would have come to a diametrically opposite conclusion. In later Mahāyoga ritual classification, Śāntigarbha is counted as one of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, the eight great vidyādharas who are the Indian founding fathers of the Mahāyoga tradition. In later rNying ma literature, these eight vidyādharas were the first recipients in this world of the eight main Mahāyoga *yi dam* deities, the *bKa' brgyad*, at their initial revelation to the human realm by the ḍākini Las kyi dbang mo che in a cemetery south west of Bodhgayā.[18] These eight deities are the main *yi dam* cycles of the rNying ma pa, and Nyang ral's *bDe gshegs 'dus pa*, that huge and seminal early *gter ma* cycle, was built around them, as is the central doxographic structure of the Mahāyoga sections of the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum itself. According to later legend, Padmasambhava was present alongside the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* in the cemetery when the *bKa' brgyad* were revealed, as the first recipient of their transmissions from each of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* in turn, so that Padma is himself sometimes counted as one of the eight. Thus the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, Śāntigarbha included, are seen by the later tradition as Padmasambhava's own tantric gurus, from whom he received his main tantric initiations. Like Padmasambhava, they are seen not as ordinary human beings, but as direct manifestations of the great tantric deities themselves, often said to reside mystically in the eight great cemeteries of India.[19] [See figure 4] It is interesting that several of the names associated with the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* feature quite prominently in Dunhuang tantric texts: [1] Mañjuśrīmitra in IOLTibJ331.1 and in IOLTibJ1774 [2] Prabhahasti (*Pra be se*) in PT44 (Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 60), [3] Śāntigarbha in IOLTibJ321; [4] Vimalamitra (*Bye ma la mu tra*, f.1) in IOLTibJ688 (on rosaries) and in IOLTibJ644; [5] Hūṃkara (with Mañjuśrīmitra, and Buddhagupta [= Buddhaguhya]) in IOLTibJ1774 (*slob pon nI 'Bu ta kub ta dang / ShI rI Man 'ju dang/ Hung ka ra*).]. This list is not exhaustive, and more such references might turn up. Clearly these figures were already seen in the Dunhuang texts as great masters, and it is important to recall that gNubs'*bSam gtan mig sgron* also presented some of them in highly mythologised terms, including some stories that persist into the modern tradition.[20] It is hard to assess how far back the mythologisation of these

18 This famous narrative can be found throughout rNying ma literature. For an accessable and influential recent rendering, see Dudjom 1991: 457-83 (and especially page 483).

19 See, for example, the main liturgy of 'Jigs med gling pa's *Rig 'dzin 'dus pa*, the *nang sgrub* or 'Inner sādhana' from his *Klong chen snying thig* cycle, which is generally said to be the most popular and widely practised Padmasambhava sādhana of the last few centuries (see its central visualisation as depicted in the *thang ka*, Figure 4). The very name of this sādhana is a reference to the Eight Great Vidyādharas, who are envisaged as inseparable from the *bKa' brgyad* and visualised as encircling Padmasambhava as his most immediate retinue. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge (see section below on PT307) also occurs prominently in this sādhana and its *thang ka*, as one of Padmasambhava's twenty five senior disciples, who later reincarnate as the great *gter ston*s.

20 Of course, no one has (or even could, given the paucity of current witnesses!) critically edit the *bSam gtan mig sgron* to the point of recovering its original readings with any confidence, so we

figures goes. As we know from contemporary history, charismatic religious figures of their type can often acquire mythologisation in their own lifetimes, let alone one or two centuries later, and yet such mythologies, once established, can persist for many centuries. It is therefore not inherently impossible that they were already seen by the authors of the Dunhuang texts in a general manner not utterly different from that of the later tradition, and, more pertinently to the current discussion, the evidence from IOLTibJ321 certainly invites us to investigate if Śāntigarbha was already seen as one of Padmasambhava's gurus or tantric brethren.[21]

To move away from rNying ma legend and into the more prosaic light of modern history, we can also say that Śāntigarbha is described in the preamble to the sole surviving witness of the 'Phang thang ma catalogue as the consecrator of bSam yas monastery. However, we are not entirely sure if this preamble was part of the original 'Phang thang ma or a slightly later addendum.[22] Śāntigarbha was also well known to Bu ston as a major imperial-period translator of Yogatantra texts, notably the influential *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhato samyaksaṃ-buddhasya kalpanāma*, a tantra concerned with post-mortem rites which played quite an important role in the conversion of Tibet.

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can never be quite sure what its earliest versions said. But this from Dylan Esler, who is currently preparing a PhD on the *bSam gtan mig sgron* at Louvain, including an edition of the text as far as extant resources will permit: Chapter 6, 277: *slob* (277.5) *dpon chen po byi ma la bod yul du 'da' ba'i tshul bstan nas // rgya gar yul na ma 'das par bzhugs pa dang / padmo 'byung gnas gting srin po 'dul du* (277.6) *bzhud pa la stsogs pa rgya gar gyi mkhas pa la grangs med na / mnga' ris bod kyi rgyal khams su yang grangs med par rig 'dzin du gshigs so //* 'When the great master Vimalamitra revealed the manner of passing away in Tibet, he nevertheless continued to dwell in India, as if he had not passed away. Padmasambhava later departed to tame the rākṣasas. There are innumerable sages in India as well as in the mighty Tibetan empire who went to the [abode of] awareness-holders.' And so on, regarding other great masters. Might gNubs' reference to Padmasambhava departing to tame the rākṣasas adumbrate the Zangs mdog dpal ri or Camaradvīpa mythology subsequently connected with Padmasambhava?

21 In the versions we have so far seen of Nyang ral's *Zangs gling ma* as identified recently by Lewis Doney to represent most closely its early strata Zl3 (i.e. Zlh, Zli), Padmasambhava is certainly represented as going from one guru to another, in a list that includes many of the expected names of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, but Śāntigarbha is missing. His niche so familiar to modern readers from the *Rin chen gter mdzod* version of *Zangs gling ma*, is in Zl3 occupied by Rombuguhyadevacandra, who in these versions teaches Padmasambhava the *Ngan sngags* and the *Drag sngags* relating to the dharma protectors. In later versions of Zangs gling ma [e.g., *Rin chen gter mdzod*], Rombuguhya teaches Padmasambhava the *'Jig rten mchod bstod*, while Śāntigarbha teaches *Ngan sngags*, as he does also in the *bDud 'joms Chos 'byung* (op. cit.).

22 See *dKar chag 'phang thang ma/ sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Pe cin, 2003: Plate 2, f.1v.6-7; p.2: *rgya gar gyi slob dpon bsam yas kyi rab gnas mkhan shaṃ ting gar bha*). We discuss these issues at greater length in Cantwell and Mayer, 2012.

PT 307: Padma and Rlang dPal gyi seng ge tame the goddesses later known as *brTan ma*

The next Dunhuang text we must look at is PT307. Dalton has already written on this at length (Dalton 2004), and made some excellent observations, but as we have pointed out elsewhere (see Cantwell and Mayer 2009: 296 ff, and also Cantwell and Mayer 2010), we feel he also misconstrued some of the evidence and came to mistaken conclusions. To recapitulate our arguments in brief, we made a clear identification of PT307 as the earliest known evidence for the ubiquitous rNying ma rite of the *brTan ma bcu gnyis*. PT307 describes Padmasambhava and Rlang dPal gyi seng ge binding by oath and administering samaya water to seven goddesses, whom Dalton had identified as a Tibetan version of the Indian *Saptamātr̥kā*, even though Dalton also remarked that some had the same names as the modern *brTan ma* goddesses. Yet although they are seven in number, and therefore might at first glance be expected to coincide with the category of *Ma mo mched bdun*, whose name is a Tibetan equivalent of *Saptamātr̥kā*, as Ehrhard has already pointed out, the names and other characteristics of the PT307 deities do not in fact seem to coincide with the *Ma mo mched bdun* (Ehrhard 2008: 15ff). As we discuss elsewhere (Cantwell and Mayer 2010: 298), PT307 seems instead to indicate a prototype of the *brTan ma bcu gnyis* category. This hypothesis is suported by two pieces of evidence. [1] We have located within later listings of the *brTan ma* all but one of the names found in PT307: in PT307 each goddess has two names, but in later texts the two names are taken as two separate goddesses, which accounts for the numerical discrepancy between the seven goddesses of PT307 and the twelve goddesses of the later *brTan ma* category. [2] The duo scenario, with Padmasambhava working in tandem specifically with Rlang dpal gyi seng ge, is typical of numerous later rNying ma *brTan ma* rituals.[23] In numerous modern *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals, of which we gave several examples (Cantwell and Mayer 2009:299), it is typically exactly the same scenario that is enacted: with the specific assistance of his famous disciple Rlang dPal gyi seng ge, Padmasambhava binds the *brTan ma* goddesses by oath and makes them take the samaya water. We argued that PT307 thus provides strong evidence that early versions of, or prototypes for, the well known *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals were already existent at the time PT307 was written, and that these rituals were then (as now) indicative of Padmasambhava veneration.

Dalton however came to diametrically the opposite conclusion: unaware of its striking continuities with the modern *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals, he argued instead that PT307 was quite discontinuous with the modern rNying ma tradition and

23 Nevertheless, as we also pointed out, deities of this sort, their *lo rgyus* texts, and their classifications, are typically quite protean, especially in the hands of a creative *gter ston*, so that further secondary permutations of the narrative and secondary associations with later categories can also emerge.

moreover disproved the existence of Padmasambhava veneration, primarily because it juxtaposed Padmasambhava with Rlang dPal gyi seng ge. He summed up his reasoning as follows:

> 'The presence of such an obscure figure [as Rlang dpal gyi Seng ge] alongside Padmasambhava is unusual. In later traditions Padmasambhava stands in a class by himself, as the lone conqueror of Tibet's local spirits during the imperial period. PT 307 suggests that Padmasambhava's role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet may have expanded over time, so as to eclipse others (notably a native Tibetan) acting around him. In the Tibetan imagination, Tibet's pre-Buddhist landscape required the expertise of a foreigner to tame it. The important role played by a native Tibetan was inconsistent with later narratives and so was forgotten.' (Dalton 2004: 768).

It seems to us his argument took insufficient consideration of the explicitly ritual nature of PT307 and its striking continuities with the modern ritual tradition, and was moreover based on two self-evidently mistaken assumptions that he made: firstly, that Padmasambhava was in later tradition usually portrayed alone in action, unsupported by any surrounding maṇḍala of disciples; and secondly, that Rlang dPal gyi seng ge was an obscure person whose involvement in taming these goddesses was largely forgotten by later tradition. On the contrary, Padmasambhava is normally shown surrounded by his disciples in the great majority of later ritual narratives and visualisations, while Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is extremely well known to the later tradition, both through his recurring presence in the *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rites, and even more so, through his ubiquitous classification as one of Padmasambhava's closest disciples. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is in fact regularly counted among the famous category of Padmasambhava's twenty-five main disciples (*rje 'bang nyer lnga*), among whom he was famous for his control over Tibet's local spirits.[24] [See figures 4, 5 and 6]

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24 Although wrongly describing Rlang dpal gyi seng ge as obscure, Dalton does nevertheless correctly connect him to the deity *'Jig rten mchod bstod*, one of the deities he is indeed often associated with. But without citing any source, Dalton then inaccurately describes *'Jig rten mchod bstod* as one of three mundane deities that were tamed by Padmasambhava (ibid 768). This is a misunderstanding of the traditional rNying ma Mahāyoga category of the *'Jigs rten pa'i sde gsum,* or the *Three Deities of the Mundane*, of which *'Jig rten mchod bstod* is one. Far from being mundane beings in themselves, these three deities are in fact classified as members of the exalted *bKa' brgyad* described immediately above in our discussion of the Eight Great Vidyādharas, the other five being the *Five Wisdom* Deities, or *ye shes kyi lha lnga*. Despite the distinction, both categories are equally considered to be aspects of Heruka, albeit the one category conferring wisdom and the other category conferring protection. So, despite the ostensibly worldly-sounding name, *'Jigs rten mchod bstod* is normatively seen as a form of Buddhist Heruka, a *yi dam* in his own right, who protects the Dharma by coercing local spirits. Thus *'Jigs rten mchod bstod* is not himself a mundane deity tamed by Padmasambhava, as Dalton believes. Quite the reverse, he is an important form of Heruka, an aspect of enlightenment with which Padmsambhava yogically identified himself, or manifested himself as, in order to

PT44: Padma tames the *bSe* goddesses and appoints them *phur srung*

The best-known Dunhuang text on Padmasambhava is PT44. PT44 has been studied a number of times already, and there is no need to repeat what is already known.[25] However, as we have already pointed out elsewhere, just as with PT307, we were unconvinced that the ritual context and nature of PT44 had yet been adequately appreciated by previous scholars. In brief, we argued that like PT307, PT44 includes a *smrang* or *rabs*-like narrative that nowadays persists intact within the *phur pa lo rgyus* texts. This narrative describes Padmasambhava bringing the *phur pa* tantras from Nālandā, comprehensively redacting them to extract the practice systems he wanted, above all taming the *bSe* goddesses at Yang le shod and appointing them the guardians of the *phur pa* tradition (*phur srung*), and then successfully transmitting the *phur pa* teachings to Tibet. In particular, PT44 includes the earliest known witness to the section of the *phur pa lo rgyus* that nowadays underpins the practice of the *phur srung* or *phur pa* protectors, who play a small but integral role in most of the general rNying ma protector liturgies for daily recitation, and who of course play a much more central role in the Vajrakīlaya sādhanas.

So, since PT44 is like PT307 clearly a text created with ritual in mind,[26] it follows that Padmasambhava was at the time of its composition already mythologised, already integrated into several ritual structures. This, in turn, implies that he was not seen as an ordinary teacher, but rather as a person of exceptional tantric power, since most gurus do not so easily become such a prominent part of general tantric rituals. Tantric gurus are of course revered by their own circle of disciples, although the evolution of the formal practices now known as *guru-yoga* is not yet understood. Even today, such *guru-yoga*s need not be full tantric practices, and need not require empowerment,

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tame the mundane deities. Hence rNying ma pa tradition maintains that it was by practising this *yi dam*, taught him by Padmasambhava, that Rlang dpal gyi seng ge came in turn to be served by the local spirits of Tibet (which perhaps helps explain his uniquely prominent presence in the *brTan ma* rites). The same general principles apply to the other two of the *Three Deities of the Mundane,* namely *Ma mo rbod gtong* and *dMod pa drag sngags*: they too are not considered mundane deities tamed by Padmsambhava, but rather, enlightened forms of Heruka by which Padmasambhava tamed mundane deities. Our thanks to Changling Rinpoche and especially Gyurme Dorje for their detailed and learned exegeses of these issues.

25 For the most recent study of the contents of PT44 and our re-analysis of the material, see Cantwell and Mayer 2009, and 2008: 41-68. The previous study of its first section was Kapstein 2000: 158-159. Wangdu and Diemberger, without citing their evidence, try to describe PT44 as a dynastic source (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13). Yet from their purely codicological analyses, Takeuchi 2004 and Akagi 2011 have dated PT44 to the second half of the tenth century, thus contradicting Wangdu and Diemberger, but supporting A.M. Blondeau's tentative dating of it in her famous 1980 article on Padmasambhava's biographies. Finally, the first published study of PT44 was, as far as we are aware, F.A. Bischoff and Charles Hartman 1971.

26 As we pointed out in our previous publications, both texts are quite explicit about their ritual natures and intentions, but this can be missed if one approaches these texts merely to extract particular passages.

although they sometimes do if done in a more elaborated form. However, Padma is in PT307 and PT44 seemingly integrated into rituals that are not *guru-yoga*, but much more generic, which could form part of almost any elaborate tantric practices of the Mahāyoga and Anuyoga types linked to *yi dam*, *tshogs* and protector rituals. They therefore form a part of general tantric practice, not the *guru-yoga* of a single master and hence not necessarily the province merely of a narrow circle of devotees. This is striking because, in what we have read so far from Dunhuang, we are not yet aware of any other tantric masters becoming integrated into any tantric ritual of any kind. As far as we can see from our readings so far, not even Vimalamitra, Mañjuśrīmitra, Hūṃkara, or Śāntigarbha get such treatment in their several mentions among the Dunhuang texts. It is true that in PT44 and PT307, some of Padma's entourage also get a mention, but they only appear because they are members of his entourage and recipients of the transmission he gives, and would surely not otherwise have featured. So, Padmasambhava's insertion as main protagonist into tantric rituals which are not even his own *guru-yoga* seems to make him ritually more prominent than his contemporaries. In a similar vein, IOLTibJ321 affords Padma a mythic status as a source of tantric dharma not given to Śāntigarbha, and not in fact matched by any other named figure in the Dunhuang tantric literature, as far as we are aware. By the same token, if future research can show that other named gurus within Dunhuang's proto-rNying ma tantric literature are, in fact, incorporated into ritual in just such a way, then of course our hypothesis could be falsified.

The second point we made concerns the quality of Padmasambhava's ritual deeds as described in PT44. According to as yet undated but probably old testimony from the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, these were not routine yogic acts. Padmasambhava did not merely tame the *bSe* goddesses in a conventional manner, or merely establish some kind of ritual tradition. More than that, with these legendary deeds Padma actually brought the *bSe* goddesses into the official rNying ma pantheon for the first time and thereby introduced significant textual innovation into the actual canonical tantras themselves. After this moment in mythic time, the canonical rNying ma tantras began to include within their chapters rites for and descriptions of these *bSe* goddesses that Padmasambhava had tamed. To have such an impact on the canonical tantras is not the kind of thing an ordinary guru could do, and once again it shows Padma as someone of particular importance to tantric literary tradition. Thus, in some later rituals, but not all, the goddesses now appear as wisdom deities within the main maṇḍala, and hence on the initiation cards currently widely used in the Dudjom tradition (apparently printed in Taiwan).[27]

27 In the *gNam lcags spu gri* as redacted by bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, the goddesses are said to be placed in the surrounding courtyard of the main maṇḍala (a courtyard outside the inner cemetery palace but within the great *gzhal yas khang* or immeasurable palace), so that in short, they can be considered to have become part of the main tantric deity's wisdom display (*gnam lcags spu gri las byang* Volume Tha: 105; *gnam lcags spu gri bsnyen yig* Volume Da:

They seem clearly to be enjoined in the *rTsa ba'i dum bu*, the brief *phur pa* text that Sa skya Paṇḍita included into the Kanjur, and which we have good reason to believe is very old indeed. A number of lines of the *rTsa ba'i dum bu* invoke a series of divine helpers for the rites, and three of these lines use the well-established names for the three groups of protective goddesses of which the *bSe* goddesses–the *sa bdag chen mo*–are one. The commentary by A myes zhabs (p.396) is explicit that the recitation indeed refers to these goddesses.[28] However, a lengthier witness for this canonical inclusion of the *bSe* goddesses is a famous tantra called the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, in which the *bSe* are indicated clearly in chapters thirteen, fifteen and nineteen as an integral part of the tantra itself (see also Mayer 1996: 128-132). A *Phur pa bcu gnyis* is mentioned in Dunhuang,[29] so we know it is quite an old title. The *Phur pa bcu gnyis* is one the *rGyud bco brgyad* or Eighteen Main Tantras of Mahāyoga, and hence doxographically situated at the very doctrinal and historical core of rNying ma Mahāyoga; for not only are these eighteen tantras traditionally defined as the main root texts of all Mahāyoga, but in addition they are the ones most frequently cited and witnessed at Dunhuang. Sadly, only two out of the eighteen tantras have left us complete witnesses at Dunhuang, namely the *Thabs zhags* that we have just discussed and the *Guhyasamāja*, but what is striking about those two is the fact that their texts have remained virtually unchanged to this day. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure if the same was true of the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*. We have as yet no way of knowing if the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* cited in TibJ321 had the same text in the tenth century that it has today. If, however, it did resemble the *Thabs zhags* and the *Guhyasamāja* in remaining historically stable, then by the time the Dunhuang cave was closed it will have already included its sections on the *bSe*, who were first tamed by Padmasambhava at Yang le shod.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely we will ever get direct evidence for the state of the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* in the tenth century. We have critically edited its text, but so far

105). This is not the case in the *Sa skya Phur chen*, where the fifty-one deities of the main maṇḍala do not include them, and they do not appear to be depicted within Sa skya Phur pa maṇḍala representations we have seen. However, it is not clear whether they are always excluded. Certainly, one of the twelfth-to-thirteenth century Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Phur pa texts (*rdo rje phur pa'i mngon par rtogs pa*) mentions the full set of twelve guardian goddesses after the main maṇḍala deities, saying that they should be meditated upon as present, three at each of the maṇḍala's corners (*Sa skya bka' 'bum* Volume 4: 179, f.362v; *srung ma bcu gnyis kyang gzhal yas khang gi zur bzhin gsum gsum bsam mo/*).

28 A myes zhabs' work is not specifically a commentary on the *rTsa ba'i dum bu* but rather on the *Phur chen* practice. However, this sādhana incorporates the *rTsa ba'i dum bu*, so the traditional Sa skya interpretations of the words are clear: "Furthermore, by reciting that the time has come for the four *bse* queens, who are Great Earth Mistresses, emanating as the female offspring of Rudra's mistress, the earth mistresses are enjoined" (*yang ru tra'i byi mo sras mor sprul ba'i sa bdag chen mo/ bse'i rgyal mo bzhi'i dus la bab ces pas sa bdag ma rnams bskul/*, 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams 1973: p.396.)

29 The Dunhuang version of the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* commentary refers both to a *ki la ya bcu gnyis* and a *phur pa bcu gnyis* (IOL Tib J 321: f.64v, 70v).

bifidity prevents the reconstruction of an archetype.[30] Nevertheless, we can say that all extant versions do include an indication of the *bSe* goddesses, so there is a good likelihood that they were present in the earliest ancestor of the extant texts. Conversely, the title *Phur pa bcu gnyis* has been applied to more than one text, so it is not impossible that today's version is different from the one envisaged in the tenth century. Nevertheless, we can say with certainty that PT44 is the earliest known version of the part of the *phur pa lo rgyus* that underpins the practice of the *Phur pa* protectors, and that a well-developed *phur pa* ritual and scriptural tradition was undoubtedly attested at Dunhuang. It is therefore prudent to put forward as a hypothesis for testing that Padmasambhava might here once again be associated with the act of canonical innovation, as we think he might have been with the *Thabs zhags*. At the very least, we can be certain from PT44 that the flourishing *Phur pa* literature evidenced at Dunhuang took 'Sambhaba' as the founder of their practice lineage, tamer and appointer of their protector deities, and possibly even the redactor of their tantric scriptures. Perhaps it is these factors that might have combined over time to make him a more important ritual figure than his colleagues: as we have argued else where, Padmasambhava's rise in Tibet is in no small part connected to the rise of Mahāyoga.[31] Finally, we should briefly observe that Padmasambhava's inclusion in rituals as we find in PT44 and PT307 raises very interesting questions about tantric ritual as a whole, which we cannot approach here. However, were Indian gurus ever integrated into rituals in quite this way, or is this a Tibetan innovation?

Padma in the *Testament of Ba*

For the final part of this article, we must briefly revisit the *Testament of Ba* narratives. Like most Tibetan historical literature, these are composite texts reconstructed out of often pre-existing parts. We cannot yet know very much about how old the various parts are, but thanks to van Schaik, we know that at least some fragments of these texts exist among the Dunhuang finds. The *Testament of Ba* narratives have sometimes been cited as evidence that Padmasambhava was widely considered a less than major figure when these texts were written. This is surely inaccurate: both texts portray Padmasambhava as a preeminent tantric, so that a better inference might simply be that devotional extravagances linked to Mahāyoga's pure vision practices (e.g *bKa' thang* hagiographies such as O rgyan gling pa's) were probably not yet current as a literary genre when the earliest strata of the *Testament of Ba* were written—but even if they were, an avowedly historical text such as the *Testament of Ba* would hardly be the place for them anyway.[32] Yet all versions of the *Testament of Ba* unequivocally

30 See Mayer 1996.

31 Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 277-314.

32 The *dBa' bzhed* refers to itself as a *bKa' mchid* (royal discourse), while the *sBa bzhed* refers to itself as a *bKa' gtsigs* (royal edict). Both titles thereby indicate that their proper context is the sphere of state, not the sphere of religious devotion or ritual.

show Padmasambhabva as a unique and extraordinary being. The *dBa' bzhed* is usually considered the earliest. In the *dBa' bzhed* narrative, Padma is invited by the Emperor at Śāntarakṣita's instigation; the latter describes him as the most powerful tāntrika in India. When in Tibet, Padma demonstrates spectacular miracles and shows unequalled mastery over local deities and spirits, including the politically potent deity Thang lha, whom he binds by oath to serve the dharma. Padma demonstrates so much magic power that the Emperor panics, and humbly circumambulates Padma, respectfully offers him many bags of gold, and begs him to go home. But Padma is disdainful. He picks up a sleeveful of sand from the ground, and instantly turns that into gold, revealing his total mastery over mundane appearances. Terrified of the awesome power of the foreigner, thinking he could seize the state if he wished, the Tibetan ministers now try to kill him by stealth, even though he is on his way home. But Padma has miraculous insight, and knows without being told exactly what is in store. When the time comes, he makes the twenty assassins lying in ambush freeze like figures in a painting, and just walks by. Being compassionate, he revives his would-be murderers as soon as it is safe to do so, but sorrowfully foresees that, although Tibet will never be threatened by non-Buddhists, its own Buddhist communities will fight amongst themselves. The Emperor for his part is miserable at the sorry way things turned out between himself and Padma. How are we to assess this narrative? Wangdu and Diemberger approach it in a perhaps slightly un-nuanced fashion: since it does not show the devotional extravagances of the later *bKa' thang* literature, they conclude it shows 'a Padma shorn of his familiar glamour'.[33] We do not think they expressed themselves exactly correctly. In fact, it is not Padma himself who is shown lacking in glamour, but rather the language describing him; it is not yet couched in the devotional extravagances connected with tantric pure vision that later readers have become habituated to, in the wake of the well-known *bKa' thang* hagiographies. Nor of course is the Empire portrayed in the *dBa' bzhed* as rNying ma tantrism's "golden age" presided over by a predestined Emperor who is Padmasambhava's pre-eminent disciple and an emanation of Mañjuśrī, as we find in the writings of Nyang ral, who believed himself to be Khri Srong de'u btsan's reincarnation (Doney 2011:140ff). But when it comes to tantric accomplishment or siddhis, the author(s) of these passages of the *dBa' bzhed* put Padma very firmly in a class of his own. No one else in the *dBa' bzhed* shows anything like such mighty powers. Surely such mighty powers, from the greateast tāntrika of India, were glamorous enough to post-Imperial Tibetans! In short, the nature of the language and several of the narrative episodes might differ substantially from the later hagiographies with their historical triumphalism, but Padma is certainly here portrayed as an extraordinary being.

Above all, we must not forget that the *dBa' bzhed* is attempting to create and preserve an historical record. While it surely integrates material from the tantric

33 Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13.

religious sources, it can be considered a rather different category of literature, so we would not expect the same kind of language to be used. Anne-Marie Blondeau (1980) has described how the traditional narratives of Padmasambhava exist in parallel and complementary 'womb-birth' (*mngal skyes*) and 'miraculous birth' (*rdzus skyes*) versions, and she mentions Kong sprul's association of the 'womb-birth' accounts with the *bKa' ma* rather than the *gTer ma*, and in particular, with the Phur pa transmission accounts (*phur pa'i lo rgyus*). Blondeau suggests that the account given in the *Testament of Ba* is more commensurable with the traditional *bKa' ma* transmission of the 'womb-birth' version of Padmasambhava's life. Thus, to make a comparison with Nyang ral's familiar hagiography, which is the source for the 'miraculous birth' version, or with the even more elaborated *bKa' thang*s, would be to miss the point (Blondeau 1980:48).[34]

In fact, we can go further than Blondeau, and suggest that one would need caution also in over-interpreting contrasts between an account such as the *dBa' bzhed*, seeking to report historical events, and the traditional mythological stories of Padmasambhava found in the context of religious transmissions, whether of the 'womb-birth' or of the 'miraculous birth' type. The 'womb-birth' stories found in the transmission of the Phur pa teachings are not only integrated with the 'miraculous birth' accounts, but they are embedded within tantric deity teachings and practices, in which their presentation by the guru on any specific occasion is designed to generate guru devotion and a pure vision (*dag snang*) of all phenomena as the tantric maṇḍala. Thus, like the 'miraculous birth' accounts, the stories are highly symbolic and connected with the tantric imagery, and so do not necessarily represent a more 'rationalist' strand of thinking. For example, Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshen's *Phur pa lo rgyus*[35] forms part of the cycle of texts for the Rong zom Phur pa tradition. Its focus on a 'womb-birth' may be seen as expressing a Mahāyoga visionary perspective equating the physical body with the tantric deity. In this account, the Guru is born in a physical body which is none other than the Phur pa deity and his maṇḍala: his waist is a knot like the middle section of a *phur pa* ritual implement, his lower body triangular in shape, again like the *phur pa*, while his hair is reddish brown like that of the Phur pa deity, and his eyes and mouth are semi-circular, thus resembling the three semi-circular shapes outlined by a circle around the central triangle in many Phur pa maṇḍalas.[36] In the 'womb-birth' account given in the apparently very old

34 See her well-known article, Blondeau 1980. While Wangdu and Diemberger do cite this article, they give no clear sign of having considered this point in their analysis. As Blondeau points out, we do not know exactly when the formalizing of the distinction between 'womb-birth' and 'miraculous birth' Padmasambhava biographies began, but we do know that the categories of 'womb-birth' and 'miraculous birth' derive from the abhidharma, and we also know that both types of Padmasambhava narratives share a very long parallel history in Tibet.

35 *dpal rdo rje phur pa'i lo rgyus ngo mtshar rgya mtsho'i rba rlabs*.

36 The full description: "Called, Śāntarakṣita, (he) had a complexion of white with (a tinge) of red, the sign of the Lotus family, and his head perfected every wondrous ability. His waist was a

Bum pa nag po, a major source for all the Phur pa *bKa' ma* transmissions, the accounts of the two types of birth are given together (bDud 'joms bKa' ma version, Volume Tha: 221-225; Boord 2002: 113-115). First, the 'womb-birth' is presented, with a slightly different version of the features of the Guru's body from Sog bzlog pa's, equally replete with potent tantric symbolism, and then there is a variant of the same story of his early years which is given in the following 'miraculous birth' story. The two accounts merge for the Guru's later deeds. A myes zhabs' Phur pa *lo rgyus*, given within his commentary on the Sa skya Phur pa practice,[37] also discusses the two types of birth together. He draws a rather Levi-Straussian symbolic opposition between the two. In this case, the womb birth is said to have taken place in the eastern region of the country of Zahor, while the miraculous birth took place in the western region of the country of Urgyan, so that the residents of the two both held the Guru to be the son of their King. He stresses that there is no contradition, since both types of birth are examples of an inconceivable array of enlightened emanations which accord with the beings to be tamed.[38]

In contrast to the traditional *lo rgyus* accounts which remain part of the contemporary religious transmission, it is unclear how to assess the Padma sections of the *dBa' bzhed*, since we do not yet know who wrote them or when. To our imagination, some parts of them invoke a moment in the time of fragments (*sil bu'i dus*), when aristocrats were beginning to articulate a fading of hopes for the old centralised imperial ways, and reinvent themselves as independent princely tantric lineage holders, even while engaged in civil wars that pitched Buddhist against Buddhist. But what is clear is that Padma is shown here as the mythic role model for aspiring aristocratic lay mantrins. Described by Śāntarakṣita as the greatest mantra adept in India, he can turn dirt to

knot, his upper body shaped to go inwards, while his lower body was triangular. His mouth and eyes were semi-circles, and his hair was reddish brown. (He was thus) born as one disfigured, (but) endowed with the phurpa's characteristics." (*śānta rakṣi ta bya ba kha dog dkar la dmar ba'i mdangs dang ldan pas padma'i rigs kyi mtshan dang ldan zhing/ sgyu rtsal thams cad rdzogs pa mgo dang sked pa rgya mdud/ ro stod bcum gzhogs/ ro smad zur gsum/ kha dan mig zla gam/ skra kham pa ste/ mi sdug pa phur pa'i mtshan nyid can zhig skyes so/*, p.12)

37 A myes zhabs, *bCom ldan 'das rdo rje gzhon nu'i gdams pa nyams len gyi chu bo chen po sgrub pa'i thabs kyi rnam par bshad pa 'phrin las kyi pad mo rab tu rgyas pa'i nyin byed.*

38 *shar phyogs za hor gyi yul mngal skyes kyis 'dul bar gzigs nas/ grong khyer gzi brjid ldan zhes bya ba na/ yab rgyal po thor cog zhes bya ba la btsun mo gnyis yod pa las/ btsun mo nges ma zhes bya ba la sras thod gtsug can zhes bya bar sku 'khrungs par bzhed/ brdzus skyes ltar na/ nub phyogs urgyan gyi yul brdzus skyes kyis 'dul bar gzigs nas/ dhana ko sha'i gling du padma'i sdong po las brdzus te 'khrungs par bzhed/ de ltar mngal skyes dang brdzus skyes kyi lo rgyus mi 'dra ba las/ shar phyogs za hor ba dang/ nub phyogs urgyan ba gnyis mi mthun te/ za hor pa na re/ slob dpon padma nged kyi rgyal po'i sras yin/ mngal skyes yin zhes zer/ urgyan pa na re nged kyi rgyal po'i sras yin brdzus skyes yin zhes zer te/ sprul pa'i bkod pa yin pas gnyis ka bden pa yin te/... 'dir gang la gang 'dul du sprul pa'i bkod pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa yin pas/ de'i yon tan gyi rnam par thar pa phyogs re tsam mthong ba la brten nas/ lo rgyus 'chad tshul mi 'dra ba rnams 'byung ba yin te/ gang ltar yang 'gal ba med do* (A myes zhabs: 33-34).

gold, foresee the future, know the minds of others, bind Tibet's deities under oath with all the political implications of that, and contemptuously withstand anything the old Tibetan Empire can throw at him. In addition, he is kind, compassionate and wise. This is no ordinary guru. Undoubtedly the *dBa' bzhed* account is consistent with the existence of a powerful Padma mythology at the time it was written; and even if we cannot yet be sure of the age of these strata of the *dBa' bzhed*, its Padma narratives do seem to have archaic features that differ from the later ones. So our conclusion is that while it seems that Nyang ral so creatively gave a new devotional, narrative and literary shape to the Padma cult in Tibet, we must also be aware of the extent to which Nyang ral was also building on themes already present, rather than merely inventing something largely new, as Dalton's interpretation of the Dunhuang sources might lead one to conclude.

Postscript

Finally, we must return to our initial caveat that the evidence is complex and inconsistent. For example, we have no evidence of Padma from Sanskrit sources, which could (but need not) indicate that he did not have much of a profile in India.[39]

39 We probably have no record of Padma from Indian sources, unless we are to believe the doubtful story that Buddhagupta's testimony to Tāranātha really referred to a trace of the Padmasambhava tradition surviving in sixteenth century Konkan. How are we to interpret this dearth of traces from India? We put this question to an Indological colleague in Oxford, Mr. Péter-Dániel Szánto of Merton College. His extended response was as follows: while we can surmise that *heruka* type texts were being produced in the late eighth century in the wake of the *Sarva-buddhasamāyoga*, nowadays it is hard to put a name to a single author of them. In other words, most of the major figures of the genre from that period remain difficult to identify today. There are a number of known *Guhyasamāja* authors, like Padmavajra who wrote the *Guhyasiddhi*, but *Guhyasamāja* is slightly older and more respectable, and both its Ārya and Jñānapada traditions of exegesis have as central deity a buddha or bodhisattva form rather than a *kāpālika* style *heruka*. Unless he is later, as many now think, we might have Vilāsavajra, to whom is attributed a commentary on **Guhyagarbha*, but his authorship of this commentary is often seen as doubtful, and he is anyway probably largely known because of his other works on the more exoteric *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. There is Vilāsavajra's reputed maternal uncle Agrabodhi, but Agrabodhi's work was definitely not of the *heruka* type. Ānandagarbha did write a *herukasādhana* based on the *Buddhasamāyoga*, but many think he was from the ninth century, not the eighth. There are famous authors of the Yoga tantras, like Buddhaguhya, but these are not the same kind of tradition at all. There is Jñānabandhu, but his work was on the Kriyā text, the *Susiddhi*, and does not contain heruka or kāpālika style esotericism. Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasiddhi* defends antinomian tantric practices, but Śāntarakṣita's fame is undoubtedly rooted in his *Madhyamaka* work, not in his passing comments on tantrism. Besides, as Ernst Steinkellner has shown, there are extremely serious doubts this text is by Śāntarakṣita at all. It is possible we may also have one Śrīkīrtipāda, disciple of Pālitapāda: the latter was perhaps the same as Jñānapāda's teacher on the Konkan (bSrung ba'i zhabs in Vaidyapāda's narrative of Jñānapāda's travels in his commentary to the well-known *Mukhāgama*). Above all, we must be aware that only the names of authors survive, not the names of gurus. In other words, even if Padmasambhava had been

Likewise, although gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes's *bSam gtan mig sgron* does mythologise Padma, mentioning his departure to tame the rākṣasas, it equally mythologises many others like Vimalamitra, and puts no special emphasis on Padma at all. In the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, Padma is clearly only one great teacher among many–such as Vimalamitra, Śrī Siṃha, Mañjuśrīmitra, Buddhagupta/guhya, dGa rab rdo rje, etc. Moreover, the *bSam gtan mig sgron* does not see Padmasambhava as a rDzogs chen teacher: he is cited only in connection with Mahāyoga and the *Man ngag lta 'phreng* (the *bSam gtan mig sgron* itself is largely connected with rDzogs chen). We need to examine gNubs's other works before we can be certain, but this surely suggests that Padma's importance was at the time comparatively narrower, emphasised more in some tenth century contexts than others, perhaps largely in those connected with *Phur pa* and other Mahāyoga cycles rather than Atiyoga.[40]

well known in India, he would not be alone among his peers in leaving no trace to modern research.

40 Of course, PT44 speaks of all the yānas, and specifies atiyoga as well as the others. The later tradition that Phur pa integrates the yānas (this is also said in the *'Bum nag*, see Boord: 138-142) seems suggested here, even if the Phur pa tantras are generally classified as Mahāyoga.

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Figure 1: Padma rGyal po, as depicted in the *Ritual Dance of the Guru's Eight Aspects* (*gu ru mtshan brgyad 'chams*), Jangsa Monastery, Kalimpong, 2009. (Photo by Cathy Cantwell.)





Figure 2: Śāntigarbha [shan ting gar pa'] from a modern set of the Eight Vidyādharas (courtesy of Rigpa Shedra Wiki (rigpawiki.org) and in an initiation card set from the 12-13th century (as established by carbon dating and style (item n. 737, courtesy of Rubin Musem; the writing on the back of this card clearly specifies Śāntigarbha).



Figure 3: Padma in the wrathful form of rDo rje ’gro bo lod, with his Guru Śāntigarbha sitting above, centre. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 437, Plate 30 (Courtesy of Dharma Publishing).



Figure 4: Padmasambhava with the Eight Great Vidyādharas overhead

Śāntigarbha is one of the stylised Eight Great Vidyādharas, shown in the circle around Padmasambhava (he is second from the right). Detail from a thangka of the Rig 'dzin 'dus pa, the most popular of contemporary Padmasambhava rites, revealed by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798). The very name of this sādhana refers to the Eight Great Vidyādharas. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is also represented, possibly in the second row from the bottom at the extreme right, as one of the twenty five leading disciples of Padmasambhava(*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*) (Thanks to the Maha Siddha Nyingma Center (mahasiddha.org), who, despite their disagreement with the tenor of this article, graciously allowed the use of their illustration on condition that it be treated with respect.)



Figure 5: Padmasambhava's wrathful form of Seng ge sgra sgrogs, with his disciple Rlang dPal gyi seng ge below right. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 439, Plate 31 (Courtesy of Dharma Publishing.)



Figure 6: Detail of figure 5 above, showing Rlang dPal gyi seng ge taming Tibetan deities. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 439, Plate 31
(Courtesy of Dharma Publishing.)

The Dead and Their Stories: Preliminary Remarks on the Place of Narrative in Tibetan Religion

Brandon Dotson

(“Revised Version”; typescript sent to editor for type-setting. Page numbers from the published version given in brackets.)

An explicit focus on an “intermediate period” calls one’s attention to continuities between the “earlier” and the “later” periods.[1] Paradoxically, it also forces one to approach individual problems from more of a *longue durée* perspective in order to define where, exactly, the differences between “early,” “intermediate,” and “later” lie. This is one reason that the conceit of the *bar dar* recommends itself, alongside other productive and justifiable periodizations of Tibet’s history, as a narrative device for exploring historical issues. In this chapter I shall approach one such issue – that of the place of narrative in Tibetan religion. As Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer (2008) have pointed out in their discussion of very similar issues in connection with Dunhuang materials concerning Padmasambhava, the narrative element that appears to be so crucial in early Tibetan non-Buddhist ritual texts is far less important – though by no means absent – in the Indian Buddhist rituals that Tibet assimilated. The general picture that emerges is one of a process by which the narrative element decreased in importance as Buddhism came to dominate Tibetan ritual practices. Cantwell and Mayer have described one aspect of this process, namely, the indigenization of Buddhism by, among other things, infusing Buddhist ritual with narratives resembling ritual antecedent tales. As they point out, this process was particularly relevant to the “intermediate period,” a fertile period of cultural transformation and social upheaval that prepared the ground for the early *phyi dar* and the “Tibetan renaissance.”

Here I build on this project by addressing the question of religion and narrative through an examination of a central arena for ritual competition: funeral rites. Through funeral rites and the polemics surrounding them we see that the lines of debate are drawn not only on the key issue of animal sacrifice, but on the role that narrative [52] should play in funeral rituals. I begin by introducing two particular ritual narrative forms, the ritual antecedent tale and the catalogue of ritual antecedent tales, and consider the manner in which they are traditionally employed. The topoi and formulae of these narrative forms are detachable, and are shared by texts belonging to separate performative settings, such as the “Account of the Minor Kings” in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. I then examine Buddhist funeral rites, and their different modes of interaction with traditional Tibetan funeral rites. The transformation of the traditional rite by the Buddhist “Substitution Text,” for example, contrasts with the strategy of the “Story of the

[1] I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the conference organizers for arranging such a successful conference and for kindly hosting the participants. I gratefully acknowledge the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, who support my current research project, “Kingship and Religion in Tibet.” I am grateful to Henk Blezer, Lewis Doney, George FitzHerbert, and Rob Mayer for their helpful comments to drafts of this chapter.

Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*), an apocryphal Tibetan Buddhist text that draws on the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* to provide a charter myth for the performance of Buddhist funeral rites. Both of these texts come from Cave 17 at Dunhuang, and are generally (though not authoritatively) dated to the ninth century. The third and final part of the chapter analyzes the rhetorical strategy of a later text, the "Account of the Food Provisioning [for the Dead]" (*Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*). This is also a charter myth for the performance of Buddhist funerals, but one that disfigures and subverts traditional narrative forms such as the "catalogue of ritual antecedent tales." This latter polemic appears to be in dialogue with anti-Buddhist polemics, such as those found in the *Bsgrags pa gling grags*, which accuse the Buddhists of plagiarizing Bon po works and stealing proprietary ritual narrative technology. The changing modes of interaction between Buddhists and their competitors in the arena of funeral rites reveal a changed context that maps an ideological shift taking place from the fall of the empire to the self-conscious avowal of new Tibetan identities such as Rnying ma and Bon in the centuries that followed.

I. Tibetan Ritual Antecedent Tales and Non-Buddhist Funerary Texts

Among the Dunhuang manuscripts one finds over a dozen interrelated funerary texts. Together with texts concerning healing, ransom rites, and divination, and alongside a vast corpus of Buddhist materials, these are some of our most important sources for the study of early Tibetan religion. The Dunhuang ritual texts are primarily focused on providing a mythical antecedent for a given ritual or for some feature of a ritual. The narratives stage such antecedents in a heroic, mythical setting that can involve kings, queens, nefarious beings, gods, and ritual specialists. They explain the origins of a rite, its necessity, and the proper methods for its performance. These tales, similarly to the invocation of a lineage tree in the context of a Buddhist teaching, serve to empower the ritual and the officiant by associating him/her with the previous successes of illustrious predecessors.

Examining the corpus of our earliest extant ritual antecedent tales preserved in Cave 17 in Dunhuang, we can demonstrate the structure of the narratives and can begin to understand how they were used. Most of these tales, almost all of which concern funeral rites, follow a basic plot of crisis and resolution. They also incorporate certain recurring tropes, motifs, and formulae. These elements can be expanded or [53] contracted in the delivery, and they can also circulate beyond the confines of the ritual genre. As such, they constitute some of the basic units of narrative in Tibet, and we encounter the same formulae and topoi in later Bon and Buddhist ritual texts, in historical writings, and in folk tales.

A ritual antecedent tale can be called *smrang*, *rabs*, or *lo rgyus*. The former term is generally a genre designation, and unlike the latter two terms, it seems not to be found in the titles of texts or tales. *Lo rgyus* is the common word for

"history," but it is also used for charter myths and ritual antecedent tales.[2] The same is true of *rabs*, which, besides designating ritual antecedent tales, can refer to non-ritual "accounts" of events.[3] Vexing from the perspective of genre designations that aspire to precise distinctions, *rabs* refers to narratives that are mythological, and which often place themselves in a time of origins. This is true, for example, of the "Tale of the Separation of the Horse and the Wild Ass" (ITJ 731), an antecedent tale for the use of the horse as a psychopomp guide to the land of the dead.[4] But *rabs* is also used in the titles of narratives like the "Account of Those who Served as Chief Councilors" (*blon che bgyis pa 'I rabs*; PT 1287, l. 63), which forms the second chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, and constitutes a series of short vignettes of the careers of Tibet's chief councilors that has been and continues to be used as a historical source.[5]

There are several characteristics that set ritual antecedent tales apart from other narrative forms. One is their use of specific, formalized register of ritual language. It [54] can be distinguished from normal prose by its specialized lexicon and by its placing of synonymous terms or phrases in apposition. This, and other forms of parallelism, is a key feature of ritual antecedent tales, but one that we shall not explore in detail here. Rather, we shall briefly introduce the broad outlines of ritual antecedent tales for funerals, and in particular the "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka rje" (*Lhe'u yang ka rje'i rabs*), which will serve as a point of departure for examining Buddhist funerary texts.

The tale begins with a formulaic statement of temporal setting that sets its action in ancient times. The spatial setting of the tale is introduced alongside the *dramatis personae*:

> Up above the sky, up atop the heavens, a certain 'Gon tsun phyva had no wife or bride. He searched for a wife and bride, and took a certain Tang

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[2] The etymology of *lo rgyus* is a "continuum of tidings" or "series of reports"; a "succession of years" is a secondary meaning (Eimer 1979: 101–03).

[3] Describing the polyvalence of the term *rabs* in an article that remains the *locus classicus* for the study of early Tibetan ritual narratives, Rolf Stein that the term has two general meanings: 1) "succession" or "series"; and 2) "type" or "race" (Stein 1971: 537–38). The etymology of *rabs* as a "tale" or "account" might derive from the former, in which case a "succession [of words]" would be very similar to the etymology of *lo rgyus*. Stein also relates *rabs* to popular Indian and Chinese narrative genres by pointing out that in the *Mahāvyutpatti*, *sngon gyi rabs* translates the Sanskrit *purāṇam*, meaning "tales of past [events]," and that *rabs* seems to be the equivalent of the Chinese *bian* 變, as in the *bianwen* or "transformation text" genre of Tang popular literature. Stein makes this latter point based not on direct translation between Chinese and Tibetan, but on respective Tibetan and Chinese translations of a passage from the Mūlasarvastivadin *Kṣudrakavastu*.

[4] The Tibetan Dunhuang manuscripts are cited according to their abbreviated shelfmarks. "PT" abbreviates Pelliot tibétain, and these documents are held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris. "IT" abbreviates "India Office Library, Tibetan collection," and these documents are housed in the British Library in London. The combination of letter and number following "IOL Tib" constitutes the full shelfmark, e.g. "ITJ 734." Where possible, I have included the title given in the text. In some cases, however, a single scroll will contain more than one named tale, and in other cases the tale will have no name.

[5] Note that the "*blon rabs*" – actually a *blon che bgyis pa 'I rabs* – in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* is not a "genealogy of councilors," a fact that also suggests that while a *rgyal rabs* may be a "royal genealogy" – as it has been traditionally translated and generically designated – it is also a "story about kings"; see van der Kuijp 1996: 43.

nga Dbud mo tang, daughter of Bdud rje ("Lord of *bdud* demons") Btsan tog skyold, as his wife and bride. The offspring they begat and conceived was born as a son, was birthed as a scion. They gave the boy a name, they gave the scion an appellation, Lhe'u Yang ka rje.

gnam gyi ya' bla na / dgung gI ya stengs na' / 'gon tsun phyva zhig khab dang / dbyal ma mcis kab dang dbyal btsald pa / bdud rje btsan tog skyold gyi sras mo tang nga bdud mo tang zhIg kab dang / dbyal du blangs te bshos tang / nams / gyi sras / bu po ru / byung / sras dral du bltam bu'i mying btags / sras gI mtsan btags pa / lhe'u yang ka rje; PT 1134, ll. 68–71; cf. Stein 1971: 492.

Typically, the tales begin with a mother and a father, who conceive one or more children. This familial setting is an important characteristic of these ritual antecedent tales. The ubiquity of this introductory topos also lends itself to formalization, and to the use of noun pairs and appositional synonym phrases, as we see above with the noun pairs *khab* and *dbyal*, and the paired verbs in the phrase "the offspring they begat and conceived" (*bshos dang nams gyi sras*).[6]

Often the manner in which the characters are introduced is enough to set off an inexorable series of events that leads to the illness or death of one of the principal characters. The most common and most adaptable trope for death in these tales is the matrimonial narrative trope (Dotson 2008: 47). This, like the other tropes for death in ritual antecedent tales, is a trope in the literal sense of the word: it turns away from the denotative sense of the unfolding of events, and points towards death. This is due not necessarily to any belief in an inherent link between marriage and danger (though such a link cannot be dismissed), but rather to the fact that these tales must "kill off" [55] a protagonist so that his or her funeral may be performed. The "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka rje" begins with a marriage, and then produces the death of the title character through the introduction of a competition trope when Lhe'u Yang ka rje challenges his maternal relatives, the *bdud* demons, to a contest and to a race that result in his death (PT 1134, ll. 71–73; Stein 1971: 492–93.

The death itself can either be simply stated or attended by a number of motifs or formulae. In the case of Lhe'u Yang ka rje, "the *bdud* demons came from the sky, the *sri* demons rose up from the earth, and they killed him and he was no more" (*gnam las / ni bdud bcad sa las ni sri langste grongs gyis / myed*; PT 1134, l. 74; Stein 1971: 493). There are other, more detailed images, including the poetic evocation of the decomposing corpse (ITJ 731r68; Stein 1971: 487), the motif of the crumbled turquoise, and the motif of sullied beauty and lost virility (ITJ 731r122–24; Stein 1971: 490).[7]

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[6] Here the meaning of *bshos*, "to copulate or beget," gives us the meaning of *nams*, which stands in relation to it as an appositional synonym. The latter term is otherwise obscure. These forms of expression obviously pose some problems for the translator, and necessitate a powerful thesaurus. At the same time, they are a great boon for the lexicographer: if one knows the meaning of one term in such an appositional construction, this gives you the general meaning of the parallel term, should it be unknown.

[7] On the turquoise, see See Karmay 1998: 320. I shall discuss all of these motifs, including the tropes for death, in detail elsewhere.

In the "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka rje," death is followed by motifs of sorrow and denial, and then by failed attempts to resurrect the deceased (PT 1134, ll. 74–89; Stein 1971: 493). While these topoi form a sizable part of this particular tale, they are absent in many others, and are essentially collapsible, optional narrative elements. Other narrative elements have a similar effect of prolonging the inevitable *denouement*. The favored priest, for example, may simply be enlisted to perform the funeral, or he may come only after the failure of others to do so (cf. PT 1285r40; Lalou 1958: 162; Dotson 2008: 48). In some cases, he must be approached via a go-between, and one go-between might fail before another succeeds in enlisting the favored priest (PT 1136, ll. 52–55).

There are further narrative topoi that can postpone the resolution. Usually the resolution is the funeral itself, but prior to the funeral it may be necessary to perform preliminary rites. One may also need to secure psychopomp horses, yak-ox hybrids (*mdzo*), and sheep. For each of these there are expandable antecedent tales that describe their origins and prescribe their use in a funerary context. In the "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka rje," the title character's father, Mgon tshun phyva, enlists the favored priest Bon gshin gshen drag, and plans to use two horses for Lhe'u Yang ka rje's funeral. The horses escape, however, and have to be chased across a series of springs before a certain Dmu rje Rgya bdun catches them and returns them to Mgon tshun phyva (PT 1134, ll. 98–113; Stein 1971: 494–95). A series of standard formulae describe how one treats such horses, e.g., they are hobbled and placed in an enclosure where one feeds them green shoots and sweet barley flour and pours for them molasses water. Then they are fitted with "bird horns." In this case, it is expanded, and we are told that the horses accept Mgon tshun phyva's request that they act as his son's pyschopomp guides by "making the great reply with their mouths, and drinking the [56] great poison with their lips" (*lan chen / kha'is / blangs / dug chen mchus 'tungs*; PT 1134, l. 116; Stein 1971: 495).

The funeral itself is usually described in stereotyped phrases that concern the construction of the tomb and other elements of the ceremony, e.g., "they built a *rgyal* with eight cords on the *bas*, and erected a four-cornered *se* in the valley" (*rgyal thag brgyad bas la bchas se gru bzhi lung du brtsi[g]ste*; PT 1136, l. 59). Here too one finds formulae describing the psychopomp horses' execution of their task, namely, "using their courage to cross the passes and using their width to carry [the deceased] across the fords" (*chab gang la ru bgyis / la yang ba rab du sbogs*; ITJ 731r101–02). The "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka' rje" also includes instructions to the psychopomp sheep (*skyibs lug mar ba*), who guides the horses and the deceased to the land of the dead. This is considerably elaborated, and the tale describes their journey over fords and passes to the realm of the gods atop the ninth stage of heaven. There, it is emphasized, the animals and the deceased man are established equally as ancestors, and enjoy the same status (PT 1134, ll. 124–33; Stein 1971: 496).

The tale closes with a formula that relates it to the present as an antecedent for success. In its simplest form, this statement of relevance states, "what was beneficial in ancient times shall be beneficial now; what was successful in ancient times shall be successful now" (*gna' phan da yang phan gna' bsod da yang bsod*; PT 1136, l. 60; Stein 1971: 504; Dotson 2008: 45). This ends the tale and creates

a segue out of narrative time and into the present situation to which this antecedent applies.

It is here that we come up against the inherent limitations of our (textual) material. The ritual narratives appear to support a mimetic ritual to be performed during or after their recitation. Stein (1971: 482) came to a similar conclusion when he remarked of ritual antecedent tales that they give the origin of rites and ensure their efficacy, but also that they are mythical precedents that one imitates during the performance of the rite. The formulaic statement of relevance, as well as the "performance notes" in these manuscripts (cf. below), imply that these narratives serve as mimetic templates for ritual practice, in which present-day priests and patients are invited to identify with their heroic, mythical antecedents. The nature and extent of this identification is not a point that one can press too far, given that the exact relationship of the ritual antecedent tale to the ritual act, e.g., preliminary or simultaneous; mimetic or divergent, is not something that may be established by textual artefacts alone. Nonetheless, the tales themselves make it clear that they are central to ritual practice, and suggest that they underpin mimetic ritual acts.

This brief description of ritual antecedent tales, spotlighting in particular the funerary narrative of the "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka rje," yields a fairly detailed compositional profile. Those versed in this compositional profile could skillfully manipulate the basic outline of a tale and "shuffle" relevant tropes, motifs, and formulae according to the occasion, duration of the rite, etc., expanding some topoi and collapsing others. In addition, these topoi and story-types were detachable and portable. That is, they circulated not only within the ritual narrative tradition, but beyond it. We now turn [57] to just such an example, where a sub-genre of the ritual antecedent tale overlaps with the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*'s "Account of the Minor Kings."

REDACTIONAL OUTLINES AND "CATALOGUES" OF PRINCIPALITIES

From Marcelle Lalou's 1965 article, "Catalogues de principautés du Tibet ancien" onward, scholars have referred to sequential arrangements of ritual antecedent tales, and similar non-narrative lists containing the names of several kingdoms, as "catalogues." This term is descriptively accurate in those cases where we find only a list that includes, for example, the names of kingdoms, kings, and ritual specialists. Indeed, Lalou collated the data from such ostensibly non-narrative forms in order to present them side-by-side in a manner that she hoped would support future historical research.[8] Rolf Stein treated some of this material in his magisterial study of early Tibetan ritual literature, and clarified the significance of the "catalogue" form:

> Ne pouvant ou ne voulant pas toujours réciter tous les récits *in extenso*, ils ont été amenés à en abréger un certain nombre. Ce faisant ils sont arrivés à

[8] It was Lalou's stated wish that the scholars to whom she dedicated the article, Ariane Macdonald and Géza Uray, should use the materials to aid historical research (Lalou 1965: 189). On the problems posed by employing these documents as sources for Tibetan history, and particularly for the association of particular clans with particular territories, see Dotson 2012. See also Hazod 2009.

> les réduire à un schéma invariable qui leur est commun. Leur résumés se bornent alors à étoffer ou à illustrer ce schéma d'un bref rappel des précédents ou des légendes d'origine. Cela finit par ressembler à une liste. (Stein 1971: 482.)

One can add to this the point that while the term "catalogue" can describe the appearance of ritual antecedent tales when they are arranged in shorthand, this may not be the most apt term for these abbreviated tales, since they are in fact narratives, reduced by contraction to "redactional outlines," which can, though need not always be, expanded in their delivery.[9]

The "redactional outline" is the starkest form of the antecedent tale, which reduces it to nothing more than setting, names of *dramatis personae*, a briefly stated crisis and resolution, and a formula relating the antecedent to the present. Besides being an *aide memoire*, the redactional outline is also instrumentalized to create a sub-genre of ritual narratives, the "catalogue of ritual antecedent tales." In its most straightforward typology, the catalogue of antecedent tales operates in the same way as a single antecedent tale, but simply adds one tale after another, [58] the force of all of them to the present ritual with the same formulaic statement of relevance that is used in a single tale. The sequential arrangement of these tales allows them to be taken as a whole, rather than simply as a string of tales. This wholeness is expressed by the spatial organization of the settings, which typically follows the course of the Gtsang po (Brahmāputra) River, and by the stated number of settings, which is usually nine or thirteen, both of which signify totality (Dotson 2012: 169–70). The movement in stages from one setting to another, upstream or, as is usually the case, downstream along the Gtsang po, also gives the impression of motion. In addition, the direction of travel can express intentionality, with upstream movements typically used for rites that recover something (e.g., a soul), and downstream movements used for expelling rituals (Gaenszle 2002: 127; Dotson 2008: 56–64). The inclusion of all of these settings within a single liturgy that reduces the tales set in each place to a spare redactional outline also conveys a sense of totality or exhaustiveness, and of the catalogue "covering" the entire Tibetan ritual universe.[10]

It is clear from the liturgies themselves how this is done. At the start of one of the catalogues in PT 1285, for example, the action in the first two settings, Rtsang ro and Skyi ro, is given in full. We have details of the symptoms that ail the gods Rtsang la Bye'u and Skyi bla Bya rmang, and we are told of how for three days and three nights the respective healers Rtsang shen Snya lngag and Skyi gshen Rgyan ngar successfully healed them.[11] Before the text goes on to the

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[9] The term redactional outline is borrowed from John Charlot, who applies it to an analysis of the combinations of stories and motifs in traditional Hawai'ian narratives. The redactional outline is the bare minimum from which the ritual specialist or bard can fill in a tale. In one of Charlot's examples, a list of a hero's opponents, for instance, doubles as a list of narratives, since each named opponent comes with a tale that the storyteller can choose to tell, or not, in the delivery (Charlot 1977: 491).

[10] In some cases, the settings may also pertain to diagnosis: if a patient's affliction is not cured by the tale (and the accompanying rite) set in one place, then the officiant moves on to another tale (and presumably another rite); PT 1285r95–97.

[11] *[±1] rtsang ro dbyes kar na'/ rtsang la bye'u zhig/ dbu snyung spyan du snyung/ gnya' na ltag du tsa na'/ / rtsang shen snya lngag gI [±2] rkang (?) dmar la/ nub sum/ mngad du mngad/ / nang*

remaining eight narrative settings, there is a note to the liturgist, set off by eye-catching punctuation, which states, "one should proceed like this until [the tale set in the land of] Rkong yul bre snar" *(/:/:/ rkong yul bre snar gyi bar du [xx] gyI bar du 'dI dang 'dra bar bgyI 'o/:/:/*; r174–75).[12] After this, the successive antecedent tales are presented in shorthand, catalogue format or redactional outline, e.g., "In 'Ol phu Dga' dang, 'Ol lha Sha bzan was struck ill. 'Ol gshen 'Jang tsa mon yug healed him" (*'ol phu dga' da[ng] 'ol lha sha bzan / snyung* [59] *'ol gshen 'jang tsa mon yug gis / shug bya thi ba la rbu /*; r177).[13] Each of the eight remaining tales, including that set in Rkong yul bre snar, is given in this same sort of shorthand that the liturgist may fill out in his tellings.

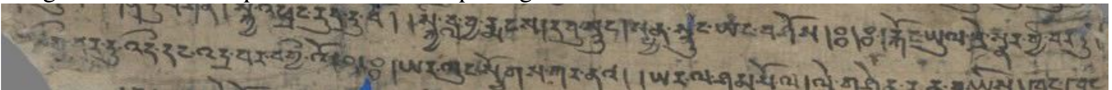
Similar notes to the liturgist offer an insight into how these liturgies were conceptualized and how these documents were apparently used. Further on in PT 1285, for example, we find the phrase, "one should continue to go around in this manner from here down to Rkong yul" (*'dI man chad rkong yul yan chad 'di bzhin bskor ro*; l. r188). This verb, "to go around" or "to wander," is found in a similar context in antecedent tales in two other ritual antecedent tales, which both include the phrase *nan 'di bzhin bskor ro*, meaning something like, "one should proceed as you have in this telling" (ITJ 734, 3r117 and PT 1060, l. 73). One of these also instructs the liturgist to "proceed as [in the] above [tale]" with regard to other tales (*gong ma bzhIn skor cig;* PT 1060, l. 48).[14] In a text containing several ransom ritual antecedents we find many instances of the expression "proceed as with the previous tale" (*nan snga ma bzhin du skor*; ITJ 734, 4r159, 5r175, 5r184, 7r305), and "proceed as in the first tale" (*nan thog ma bzhin du skor*; 4r153). The use of the terms "recitation" (*nan*) and "go around" (*skor* or sometimes *'gor*) clarify the terminology for the "catalogue of antecedent tales" form. A *nan* is the recitation of an antecedent tale. To "go around" or "wander" is to tell one tale after another or to link tales together, and this is called a *nan skor*. Like the spatial organization of the antecedent tales' settings in the catalogue form, the verb *skor* imbues these tellings with a sense of movement.

A single antecedent tale can, however, include different settings, and name different places, without being a catalogue of antecedent tales. Such is the

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sum rbu ru rbu/ rtsang brang rub du bor/ / dbu snyung/ spyan snyung/ gnya' na ltag [±2] $ / / skyI ro ljang sngon na skyI bla/ bya rmang dbu snyung/ spyan snyung ste/ skyi gshen rgyan ngar gyIs/ chu bya gnya' rIngs la/ nub sum/ rbu ru rbu nang sum bshan du bshan/ skyI 'phrang rub du bo/ skyi bla bya rmangs/ dbu snyung/ spyan snyung yang bshos (ll. r171–74).

12 This punctuation, transliterated by Old Tibetan Documents Online (http://otdo.aa.tufs.ac.jp) with a colon, consists of double circles (one over another) separated by a single *tsheg*. Here is an image that shows the punctuation in this passage.



13 I paraphrase, since the translation of *shug bya thi ba la rbu* is uncertain. The verb *rbu* is synonymous with the more prevalent verb in this text, *mngad*, and they appear profusely in this text but little, if at all, elsewhere. Other synonymous verbs in the text are *bslen* and *bshan*. They are used variously, but in the above context the priest is the agent, and an animal – here a type of bird – is marked in the dative. A working hypothesis is that the priest expels the patient's malady into the animal, in which case *rbu/dbu* is a variant of *'bud*, "to drive out, expel" (Hill 2010: 203).

14 The imperative form shows clearly that these are performance notes or instructions. Where there is instead the future form, e.g., *bskor*, this has a comitative meaning: one "should" go around as in the above tale.

case with the mention of multiple suitors and their kingdoms in an antecedent tale in PT 1285. There, the list of the failed suitors arranges them one after another, westwards, against the eastward course of the Gtsang po (Dotson 2008: 49–53). But none play an otherwise significant role in the tale, and it is only with the successful suitor and the marriage that we come to the crisis, its resolution, and its application to the present. I have differentiated such liturgies before as "narratives" as opposed to "catalogues," and I think that this remains relevant (Dotson 2008: 45). More specifically, one can refer to a "single antecedent tale with multiple settings," which accurately describes this example of the failed suitors from PT 1285 and, for example, the "Tale of the [60] *Rgyal byin*" in PT 1040. In the latter, we have repeated antecedents of failure and death that are not individually resolved. What appear to be items of cursed dowry are implicated in the death of a woman's successive husbands, and the deaths of successive kings who come to possess these items. Unfortunately, the scroll breaks off before a resolution is given, so we cannot know the exact purpose of the tale. It is a fair guess that a ritual specialist will be called upon to deactivate or destroy the cursed objects, and that this would then be related to the present-day deactivation or exorcism of similarly malefic objects.[15]

One clear difference between a single antecedent tale with multiple settings and a catalogue of antecedent tales is the site of the resolution. In a catalogue, there is a resolution in each individual setting, when, for example, each god or king is healed. These healing antecedents can be related to the present ritual after each setting, and/or after all of the tales in the "catalogue" have been told. In a narrative with multiple settings there is not a resolution in each setting. Rather, each setting is the site of a crisis, and this crisis is not resolved until the final setting.

This review of the nature of catalogues of ritual antecedent tales brings us to the "Account of the Minor Kings" in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. There, in the *Royal Genealogy*, which forms the first part of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle,* we find a list of kingdoms and the names of the kings and councilors who resided in each of them, proceeding, as in PT 1060 and other ritual texts, from west to east with the course the Gtsang po. It is introduced as a *rabs*: "The account of those who, acting as minor kings, resided in their respective castles in their respective minor kingdoms, and of those who served as councilors of the minor kings" (*rgyal pran yul yul na / mkhar bu re re na gnaste / rgyal pran bgyId pa dang / rgyal pran gyI blon po bgyid pa 'I [rabs]*; PT 1286, l. 6; Bacot, *et al*. 1940–1946: 83). This is the most non-narrative "catalogue" we have, and one after another it lists kings, kingdoms, and councilors. After giving its title, it begins with the first two kingdoms:

[15] See Stein 1971: 545, where he writes of this text, "Il s'agit plutôt de précédents d'une certaine méthode rituelle concernant le *rgyal* et le *byin* (puissance, bénédiction ?)." The text requires further study, but it appears that Stein misunderstood *rgyal byin*. Two alternative understandings present themselves: 1) *rgyal byin* is short for "[the dowry that] Rgyal [de ched po] gave (*byin*) [his daughter]"; or 2) a *rgyal byin* is a nefarious force or demon. The latter explanation is supported by the term's appearance in an inauspicious divination prognosis in the dice divination text ITJ 738: "this prognosis… will invite hatred [towards you]. *Sri* demons and *rgyal byin* and *'gong po* demons will flourish from the *pho sa*" (*mo 'dI chIg shIn [---] la bab ste // mkhon kyIs sna drangs te // pho sa nas srI dang rgyal byIn dang 'gong po che ste /*; 2v14–15).

The overlord of Dar pa in Zhang zhung was Lig snya shur, and the two councilors were Khyung po Ra sangs rje and Stong lom Ma tse.

In Phyed kar in Myang ro the lord was Rtsang rje 'i Thod kar and the two councilors were Su du and Gnang.

> [61] *zhang zhung dar pa 'I rjo bo lig snya shur / blon po khyung po ra sangs rje dang / stong lom ma tse gnyIs / / [myang] ro 'i pyed kar na / rje rtsang rje 'i thod kar / blon po su du dang gnang gnyIs /*; PT 1286, ll. 7–8.

It goes on to list a total of seventeen such entries, each with a territory, ruler, and two councilors. The directional orientation of the list, and its claim, at the end, to have listed thirteen minor kingdoms, indicates that it participates in the same traditions that inform the organization of space in ritual liturgies. Here, as in catalogues of antecedents such as PT 1060, we find a clear symptom of adhering to such a formula: the stated number of kingdoms does not agree with the number of narrative settings that are actually listed (cf. Dotson 2012: 169–71). Similarly, the kings named in the *Chronicle*'s account of the minor kingdoms are not real people, but the same of mythical kings found in ritual narratives, whose names are usually composed from vague royal ethnonyms.[16] The purpose of the "Account of the Minor Kings" is not apparent until the end, when we are told that all of these kings vied with one another and that none could conquer the first royal ancestor, 'O lde spu rgyal, who subjugated them all. The account ends there, without any statement relating itself to present realities.

In considering the *Chronicle*'s "Account of the Minor Kings," we can assess the extent to which it adheres to the typologies of ritual antecedent tales and catalogues of ritual antecedent tales outlined above. Formally, it has only the bare bones of our typology: *dramatis personae*, crisis, and resolution. If we view each setting as a redactional outline to be filled out, then we might assume that of each kingdom one might say, "king so-and-so and his councilors so-and-so vied with the other kings and councilors, but could not defeat 'O lde spu rgyal, and was conquered." Each individual setting, and the catalogue as a whole – if it be a catalogue – lacks the final element relating the tale(s) to the present. From this perspective, one can neither say that the "Account of the Minor Kings" is a single antecedent tale with multiple settings, nor that it is a catalogue of such tales. It is clear, however, that the "Account of the Minor Kings" performs the same function as the spatial arrangement of redactional outlines does in a catalogue of antecedent tales: it presents a formulaic model of a specific, bounded ritual-spatial universe that would have been recognized as such by its audience. In this case, each setting is not the site of an antecedent tale; the point is rather the whole itself, and the Tibetan king's assertion of dominion over this schematized representation of the world.

[16] There may be exceptions to this, and we can point to Dgu(g) grI 'i Zing po rje, who is named as king of Ngas po, as someone who appears as a "historical" character in chapters three and four of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*; see Bacot, *et al*. 1940–1946: 132–34 and Dotson 2013a. The *Chronicle*'s value as a source for Tibetan history is a point that I shall address in detail in a translation and study in preparation.

This overlapping of form, content, and of genre designations leads to a productive line of enquiry on the relationship between ritual literature and historiography, but one which we must lay aside for the time being. We shall turn now to explore Buddhist [62] attitudes towards Tibetan ritual antecedent tales and redactional outlines, particularly in the context of funeral rites.

II. Tibetan Buddhist Appropriations of Ritual Antecedent Tales

Animal sacrifice appears to lie at the center of early Tibetan funeral rites. The horses, sheep, and other animals that guided the deceased to the land of the dead were presumably only constituted as pyschopomps when they were sacrificed to join the man or woman in death. In the "Tale of the Yak-Ox Hybrid" (*mdzo rabs*) for example, the text describes the butchering of the yak-ox hybrid and the placement of its parts in the tomb.

> They killed the *mdzo mo* and cast the four sections of flesh as *bya za khra thog*. They/he carried the four sections as the brother's *snying lan*. They installed the four sections in the sister's tomb, and installed the head and the internal organs as the sister's *mchun.*
>
> *mdzo mo bsade zha*[17] *lhu bzhi go scogs na bya za khra thog du boro / / lhu bzhi go scogsni mying po snying lan du khyer / lhu bzhi go stsogs ni sring mo'i ngur du bcug mgo brang smad lnga ni sring mo'i / mchun du bcug /*; PT 1068, ll. 54–57.

In the passage immediately following, however, we have a hint that an effigy might be used:

> The loving brother *gshen* sought and sought; the eternal companion, the lifelong wealth/livestock. The blood, vermillion blood. The bones, conch bones. The hooves, iron hooves, the horns, golden horns, the eyes, the *spug* gem eyes.
>
> *mying po mnyes gshen gyis btsal btsal ba gzha gstsang gyi rogs tshe rabs gyi pyugso / khrag ni mtshal gi khrago / rus ni dung gi ruso / rmyig pa ni lcags / gi rmyig pa rva gser gi rva / / myig ni spugi myig/;* PT 1068, ll. 57–59.

This is an interesting point, and it reminds us of the dynamic environment that produced these texts, none of which – in their extant Dunhuang exemplars – predate the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet. Here the Buddhist aversion to animal sacrifice, and perhaps a growing sentiment against it may have led bon and gshen priests to substitute effigies for live animals in their rites. Such adjusted but still ostensibly "non-Buddhist" rites may have also been used by

[17] Read *sha*.

Buddhists. This does not explode the general picture of a movement from widespread animal sacrifice to its piecemeal prohibition across the Tibetan cultural area, but rather lends some nuance to the models of interactions between Buddhists and sacrificers. As is well known, the use of scores of horses in funeral rites is clearly demonstrated from the excavation of [63] tombs at Dulan, and the sacrifice of horses at a funeral is also referred to in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

It is also clear from the numerous, often fragmentary, Buddhist polemics against animal sacrifice in funeral rites that this practice was as contentious in early Tibet as it has been ever since. In a fragment of a catechism/polemic, we find the following passage, which could just as easily be authored by a lama or a *gter ston* in the present-day Himalayas:

> According to the divine religion, "One should not kill living beings." If one removes the roots of both fratricide/incest pollution and corpse pollution, then the gods shall be happy.
>
> "Renounce fighting in retribution for hurt and anger. Rely on *dhāraṇī*/spiritual sustenance for extensive and numerous joys." So it says. Untie the knot of enmity! If one removes the root of faults, the gods shall be manifestly pleased. If they look upon such behavior, they shall not be made to be displeased and upset. They shall remain unruffled.
>
> Some say, "As for making the gods upset, it is none other than this: there are different ways to worship the gods. [You] worship Buddha with *ska ma chos*.[18] We worship our *sgo lha* and *yul lha* with live animals. The rituals performed are not in accord, and so [the gods] become displeased and upset." There are many who say this. But Buddha…
>
> *lha chos las sems can no cog gI srog myi gcad do zhes 'byung ste / / smye bag dang ro bag gnyIs ka'I drung phyung zhing mchis na / / lha dgyes pa'I rigs / / gnod khro glen ba'I 'thab rtsod ni spangs / / dga' dgu yangs pa'I gzungs ni bsten ces 'byungste / /mkhon gyI mdud pa ni bshig / /bkyon bar gyi drung ni phyung na / /lha dgyes par mngon te / / tshul 'dI rnams gzigs na yang / / myi dgyes shing 'thur ba'I gcugs ma mchis te / / myi 'thur bar yang gda'/ / kha cig na re / / lha 'thur ba'I gcugs lta zhig / / gzhan ma mchis kyang lha brjed pa la tha dad de / / sangs rgyas ni ska ma chos su gsol/ / bdag cag gI sgo lha dang / / yul lha ni srog chags kyIs gsol te / brjod pa'I cho ga myi 'thun bas / / myi dgyes shing 'thur bar 'gyur ro zhes mchi ba dag kyang mchis grang ste / / yong sangs rgyas*; ITJ 990, ll. 6–13.

Another fragmentary polemic, also about funerals, simply states, "it is inappropriate to kill" (*bsad pa'I yang myI rigs*; ITJ 562, 1r2). A further fragment from the same document begins to offer a strategy for avoiding sacrifice:

> If it be inappropriate to violate the orders of the *bon po* and the *gsas*, then, since it is also inappropriate that such great suffering should result from doing as they say, and since, when funerals have been performed up until now and [64] funeral rites have been performed according to the "Tale of

[18] The religion of karma?

the Psychopomp Sheep," where its hooves rend cliffs on which there are no paths and its snout sucks up [the water of] lakes that have no fords, but nowadays…

brgya zhIg la bon po / dang / gsas gyi bka' gcag du myi rung ste / / de bzhin du mchi' bar gyur na ni / de tsam las sdug bsngal cher yang / myI rung bas / yang skyIbs lug gyi rabs de bzhIn du mdad ni / sngan cad shId gtang ngo / 'tshal kyis / brag lam myed / do 'tshal ni / rmyig pas dral / mtsho rab myed do / 'tshal ni / sngur pas rngubs pas / deng sang du / phyogs su /; ITJ 489, 1v1–4

Unfortunately, the *pothī*-format leaf ends at this point, and its continuation has not been found. It would seem to be a charter for the transformation of the traditional funeral rite involving the psychopomp sheep. This is all the more likely for the fact that we have a text which details the "substitution" or "transformation" (*bsngo ba*) of traditional Tibetan funerals to accord with Buddhist ideology. Stein (1970) studied and translated this text, PT 239, along with a related fragment, ITJ 504.[19] Imaeda (2007: 166–69) refers to it as a "substitution" text, and believes that it forms a suite of interrelated Buddhist funerary texts, together with the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*) and the "Guide to the Land of the Gods" (*Lha yul du lam btsan pa*).[20]

The "Substitution Text," for example, seems to take it as given that one must use the frame of the non-Buddhist funeral. This is precisely the situation described in the above fragment, ITJ 489, which addresses a situation in which a Buddhist cannot abandon the traditional rite as dictated by the *bon po*, and must follow the customs given in the (non-extant, possibly fictitious) "*Tale of the Psychopomp Sheep." The "Substitution Text" goes through the various elements of the "black funeral," and transforms them so as to avoid animal sacrifice and emphasize the core Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth. Accommodationist in the sense that it is bound by the structure of a non-Buddhist rite, the transformation of each stage of this rite is also an occasion for direct confrontation. In the part of the rite that calls for the sacrifice of a sheep, for example, the text states,

> According to treatises of the black men, the custom of the black funerals, the origin narratives (*smrang*) for which the *bon* (priest) wants a fee, and the tales (*rabs*) for which the demons want burnt offerings, the sheep is wiser than man, and the sheep is also more powerful than man. Though [the stories may say] that, each and every being is guided by his own karma, and this means that a sheep has no wish to lead you on the path, and has no wish to rend cliffs. [65] Neither is a sheep able to serve as a guide, nor is it able to make plans, nor can it use its limbs to shoot an arrow.

[19] Since then another related fragment, ITJ 493, has been identified.

[20] On the latter, see Lalou 1949. While "transformation" may be more descriptively adequate, it is inadvisable to refer to PT 239 as a "transformation text," given that this famous genre of Chinese text (*bianwen*) was present in Tibet in the imperial period. I therefore follow Yoshiro Imaeda's custom of calling PT 239 and related documents "substitution texts."

Trusting in what is real, trusting in the treatises of the white, divine religion, the ways of the white men, and the white funerals, we rely on the white, divine religion. We do not insert hands and cold iron into your insides. We do not draw out your warm blood. We do not claw out your heart and organs. We do not hang your flayed skin from your shoulders. We do not grind your white bones in a mortar. We do not cook your red flesh in a pot. According to the way of men of the upper realms, we do not do the work of *'dre* demons; we do not do the work of *srin* demons. The eyes, living eyes, sparkling; the ears, living ears, flopping; the horns, living horns, curling. You are left to graze on the grasslands, on the fields, pastures, and meadows.

Fumigate with the purifying divine incense. By the virtue of offering powerful, divine mantras, may this deceased, whose name is xxx, wherever he may be [re]born, be free from the suffering of weapons and such things, and may he obtain an eternal body, free of the sufferings of birth and old age.

Having well loaded the psychopomp sheep, may it be good and auspicious for the remaining relatives.

myI nag po 'i gzhung/ /shId nag po 'i lugs/ /bon yas 'dod smrang/ /'dre gsur 'dod gyI rabs las/ /myI bas nI lug 'dzangs la/ /myI bas kyang lug mthu che bar 'byung ba yang/ /sems can thams gyang sa so 'I las kyIs khrId pas/ /lug gyIs lam drang yang myI dgos/ / lug gyIs brag dral yang myI dgos / lug gyIs lam mkhan byed kyang myI nus / / lug gyIs blo byed kyang myI nus / lag dum gyIs mda' 'phen yang myI nus par / / ngon don[21] *la yid ches pas / / lha chos dkar po 'i gzhung / / myI dkar po 'i lugs shId dkar po 'i ches / / lha chos dkar po la rden*[22] *nas / / lcags lag grang mo ni khong du ma bcug / / khong khrag dron po nI phyir ma phyung / / don snyIng smad lnga nI spar gyIs ma bdab / / g.yang bzhI nI phrag la ma gzar / / rus pa dkar po nI gdun*[23] *la ma rdungs / / sha dmar po ni bzangs su ma btsos / / mtho res*[24] *myI 'I lug kyIs 'dre 'I lam*[25] *ma byad*[26] */ / srIn gI las nI ma byas ste / / dmIg gson myIg nI rIg rIg / / rna gson rna nI dab dab / / rus gson ru nI kyIl kyIl / / zhIng spang snar po la nI spang rtsI yan du za zhIng bzhag pa ste / / lha spos gtsang mas nI bsangs / / lha sngags gnyen pos pos bdab pa'I yon gyIs / / myIng 'dI zhes bya ba / / gar skyes gar skyes gyang / / mtshon cha las bstsogs pa'I sdug sngal thams cad las thar ba dang /* [66] */ skye rgan ba'I sdug sngal myed pa'I g.yung drung gyI lus thob par shog shIg / / skyib lug legs par stad pas / / gnyen dun slad ma rnams la / / rjes bzang zhIng bkra shIs par gyur cIg /*; PT 239, 7r4–10r3; Stein 1970: 162–64; Karmay 1998: 160.

[21] Read *nges don*.
[22] Read *rten*.
[23] Read *gtun*.
[24] Read *ris*.
[25] Read *las*.
[26] Read *byas*.

The project of the text is clear: a site of sacrifice has now become an occasion for discoursing on karma. The animals that would have been sacrificed are now set free.

In the section of the text that transforms the sacrifice of a horse, the Buddhists draw on their own narrative repertoire and tell the famous tale of Bālāha, Avalokiteśvara's flying-horse incarnation, saving the sea-faring merchants in Singhala as related in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha sūtra*. After this tale we find a truncated version of the formulaic statement of relevance so integral to the antecedent tale form: "today, looking to tomorrow, this son of man's karma is exhausted…" (*dI rIng sang ltar myI bu las zad cing/*; PT 239, 12r4; Stein 1970: 164).[27] Whereas this may have marked the end of a traditional ritual antecedent tale, here it is a transition into a parallel that is drawn between the deceased's own helplessness and that of the merchants beset by demons on their voyage to Singhala. Then the man's named psychopomp horse is likened to Bālāha, in whose guise he is able to act as a savior for the deceased. In this way the Buddhists can retain the horse in a central role while transforming the reasons for doing so. It is a familiar strategy in the history of Buddhist interactions with competing traditions.

There is no doubt that the Buddhists vilify the non-Buddhist funerals. They are "black funerals," performed by "black men," in contrast to the "white funerals" of the "white, divine religion." They attack their opponents' fundamental texts or traditions (*gzhung*), and their ritual narratives (*smrang* and *rabs*). Besides this, they depict the *bon po* as being greedily concerned with their ritual fee (*yas*), and associate them, and their acts of animal sacrifice, with *'dre* demons and *srin* demons. Such charges would continue to characterize Buddhist polemics against their *bon po* (and Bon po) opponents.[28] Perhaps the most interesting point in the Buddhist attack is their targeting of named ritual antecedent tales. This brings us to a second mode of interaction and appropriation: the Buddhist construction of rival ritual antecedent tales.

The "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" adapts well-known Buddhist narratives, like the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* and the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra*, to narrate the divine prince Rin chen's search for a remedy against death. This "history" [67] or "account" (*lo rgyus*) is a long narrative that constitutes a charter myth for the performance of Buddhist funerals. In his study of the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*), several copies of which were found in Dunhuang, Yoshiro Imaeda describes the impetus for its composition:

> The Buddhists, in fact, found themselves face to face with a population submerged in the indigenous religion. It was impossible to impose new ideas on them in an abstract way and so it was therefore necessary to

[27] Here *myi bu* is a faint echo of *myi rma bu mching rgyal*, the traditional name used to refer to the patient in ritual antecedent tales in the same fashion that the "Substitution Text" refers elsewhere to "the deceased, whose name is xxx" (*gshing mying 'di zhes bya ba*; PT 239r2, ll. 4–5ff) (cf. Dotson 2008: 45, n. 23).

[28] Following a convention employed by Stein, I use the lower case, italicized *bon* to indicate the "*bon po* ritual tradition," and the upper case Bon to indicate the self-conscious emergence of Bon as a religion against the backdrop of the rise of Buddhism as Tibet's dominant religion; see Kapstein and Dotson 2007: ix, n. 4.

employ an appropriate 'pedagogical method'. It is this that led to the creation of the story of Rin chen that, situated in a time qualified by the use of 'formerly' (p. 137), could be used as a 'story of origin', an example of the efficacy of Buddhism in the search for a remedy against death. (Imaeda 2007: 170)

The "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" includes the key elements of the ritual antecedent tale form introduced above. We are introduced to the characters in heaven, and immediately to the crisis, namely the death of Rin chen's father, the king of heaven, and Rin chen's anguished attempt to come to terms with the dawning awareness of mortality. The main part of the narrative consists of Rin chen's encounters with different teachers in different settings. In each setting the protagonist, Rin chen, fails to find the remedy for birth and death that he seeks, and is sent to a further teacher. This is similar to several of the topoi in traditional ritual antecedent tales, among them the "failed suitors motif," "false priests motif," and "summoning the favored priest motif." Unlike the "false priests motif" found in some ritual antecedent tales, this element is not used here for polemic ends. Some of the antecedent tales in PT 1285, for example, contrast the success of the favored ritual specialist with the failures of those outside of the tradition – in this case one hundred male *gshen* from the white, sunny mountain and one hundred female *gshen* from the black, shady mountain (Dotson 2008: 48). In the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," by contrast, each failed resolution or "false teacher" is rather a stepping-stone on a long narrative journey to meet the Buddha. All of these topoi have the effect of postponing the resolution and emphasizing the distance between the starting point and the state to be actualized. In a ritual, as opposed to a narrative context, one might say this emphasizes the distance between human and divine. It is only in the final narrative setting, in Magadha, that Rin chen meets the Buddha, who resolves the crisis. At the end, we also learn the relevance of the tale. This is not given with a formula that explicitly relates Rin chen's journey to the present, but rather it takes the form of the Buddha giving general instructions to tantric priests for how to perform funeral rites according to the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī*.

Like the story of Bālāha in the Buddhist transformation of the sacrifice of the psychopomp horse, the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" also draws on Buddhism's rich narrative repertoire. Its two main sources are the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* and *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra*. Unlike the story of Bālāha, however, the tale of Rin chen's search for a remedy against death is less encumbered by its competitors' [68] ritual narrative technologies. The narrative does not underwrite a concurrent or mimetic ritual in the same way as a ritual antecedent tale appears to do. For example, despite the language used in each setting, where Rin chen requests a "remedy against death," the *Skye shi'i lo rgyus* is more a bereaved son's existential search for meaning than it is an antecedent for a ritual that constitutes a remedy against death (Imaeda 2007: 119). In the end the Buddha does not perform the funeral rite for Rin chen's father, nor does he embody a paradigm for subsequent ritual practitioners, but rather gives instructions to tantrikas. This is a subtle, but important diminishing of the role of narrative in ritual, but it belies a fundamental difference in orientation concerning the utility

of narrative for ritual. These are not antecedent tales, but charter myths, and they present themselves as background preliminaries rather than as ritual centerpieces.

The "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" is less a transformation of the traditional Tibetan ritual antecedent tale than an alternative ritual narrative technology. While the "Substitution Text," enunciates a ritual that both mirrors and undermines the "black funeral" based on ritual antecedent tales like the "*Tale of the Psychopomp Sheep," the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" dispenses with such mimetic opposition. This effectively resolves the apparent unease that Buddhists felt about a situation in which they were beholden to the traditional funerals and had to work within the outlines of rites that called for animal sacrifice. With the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," Buddhists could compete more or less on their own terms, offering an alternative to the "black funerals."

Read in isolation, the "Substitution Text" and the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" could easily be mistaken for diachronic developments in the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism. The "Substitution Text" could be viewed as reflecting a time when Buddhists were forced to work within the fold of the dominant ritual tradition and its funerals, which their aversino to sacrifice compelled them to transform. The "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" would be taken to pertain to a later stage, when Buddhism was able to compete in the funeral ritual arena on its own terms. This is the type of error that one can easily make by studying texts only for their contents without analyzing them as physical objects. As mentioned above, Yoshiro Imaeda sees the "Substitution Text" and the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*) as part of a suite of three texts together with the "Guide to the Land of the Gods" (*Lha yul du lam btsan pa*). Imaeda's argument is based not only on the close relationship of their contents, but on the fact that the latter, whose sensibilities are very similar to those of the *Skye shi'i lo rgyus*, is found on the verso of the concertina (PT 239) that contains the "Substitution Text" on the recto. Moreover, the two texts are written in the same hand. It is clear, therefore, that the transformation of content and the direct polemical confrontation characteristic of the "Substitution Text" is a mode of interaction alongside other concurrent modes, such as the construction of a rival, Buddhist narrative in the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death."
[69]

Brief Excursus on Dates

This discussion of synchronous modes of Buddhist engagement with non-Buddhist ritual traditions versus diachronic phases of assimilation or conversion should also prompt us to query the dates of texts that we have so far discussed. All of the manuscripts that we have mentioned come from Cave 17 in Dunhuang, in which manuscripts could have been deposited from the time of its creation when it was carved into the wall of Cave 16 in 832–834 up until the time of its sealing in the first part of the eleventh century.[29] This period is roughly contiguous with the "intermediate period," and a large portion of the Tibetan manuscripts from Cave 17 date to the Guiyijun rule of Dunhuang after the

[29] For an excellent overview of the chronology of Cave 17, see Imaeda 2008.

collapse of the Tibetan Empire. Of course many manuscripts from the period of Tibetan occupation (c. 786–848) also made their way into Cave 17. Advances in the paleography and codicology of early Tibetan documents have gained pace recently, but many of the key manuscripts remain undated. This is not the place to go into a detailed analysis of the manuscripts that we have employed here, but one can state that none of them have been authoritatively dated. The ritual antecedent tales contain precious few text-internal clues, given that their contents are mythological. The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* contains information that can only have been gleaned after the year 841, and among the panels that were glued together to provide enough paper for the scroll we find a discard of a Chinese *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*.[30] This was commissioned, along with thousands of copies of the Tibetan *Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā sūtra* and the *Aparimitāyur-nāma sūtra,* under Emperor Khri Gtsug lde brtsan (alias Ral pa can) between approximately 820 and his death in 841. This supports Uray's suggestion that the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* dates to the mid-ninth century (Uray 1979: 285). For those who would suggest that the *Chronicle* is late, e.g. mid-to-late tenth century, or even early eleventh century, it requires that they imagine a scenario in which panels of half-used paper were conserved for 100 to 150 years before being compiled as a scroll and reused.[31] This is fairly implausible in a regional center for paper manufacture such as Dunhuang. The various manuscripts of the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" are written in a variety of handwriting styles. None of these, however, and none of those styles of writing found on the other manuscripts in our survey, display the most easily identifiable characteristics of Guiyijun-period styles, such as the "wave-form" of descender (Takeuchi 2012: 206; van Schaik 2013: 126). Nor do they display any other known indicators that would immediately recommend them as belonging to the Guiyijun period.[32] Imaeda (2007: 172), for his part, dates the manuscripts of the [70] "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" to "about 800." This is to only briefly address the manuscripts as textual artefacts. The oratorical, narrative, and ritual traditions that they represent may – and in the case of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, most certainly do – stretch back for quite some time. We can in any case say with confidence that these traditions circulated during the "intermediate period."

The final text that we shall examine also has a complicated and unsettled transmission history. The "Account of the Food-Provisioning [for the Dead]" (*Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*), is appended to the *Dba' bzhed.* It is a polemical charter myth justifying the performance of Buddhist funeral rites. The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* has not been reliably dated, but some of its contents hint at its milieu. For example, it partakes heavily of the hagiographic tradition surrounding Vairocana, it belittles Bon, and it is aware of *gter (ma)*.[33] Its treatment of early Tibetan ritual and

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[30] I am indebted to Kazushi Iwao for this observation.

[31] Michael Walter claims that the *Chronicle* is "certainly post-Imperial," and that it "may date to as late as the early eleventh century" (Walter 2009: xxvi, n. 5).

[32] The form of Avalokiteśvara's mantra in the "Guide to the Land of the Gods" (*Lha yul du lam btsan pa*), for example, is *oṃ hri hung pad ma pri ya sva ha*, and not the famous six-syllable *oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*, which seems only to have appeared later (Lalou 1949: 44; Imaeda 1979; van Schaik 2006: 66–68).

[33] The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* polemicist laments near the end of his text that "it is said that the foolish followers of the Bon tradition hid many items of wealth and enjoyment as *gter*" (*bon lugs glen pa dag nor long spyod mang po gter du sbed pa yod skad*; Wangdu and Diemberger 2000:

historical traditions, even in refuting and lampooning them, also displays misunderstandings that are probably indicative of its temporal remove. To name only a few, it treats the title "warlord" (*zing po rje*) as if it were a proper name; it mistakes the name of this ruler's stronghold; and it uses Mchims Dwags po as a compound toponym despite the fact that Mchims and D(w)ags po were separate, albeit neighboring, kingdoms. More egregiously, the entire funeral scenario of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* is rendered problematic by the fact that Mu ne brtsan (po), who presides over the scene, actually predeceased his father Khri Srong lde brtsan, and could therefore not manage his father's funeral (Dotson 2007: 13, n. 48). The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* appears after the end of the *Dba' bzhed*, and is not found in other extant versions of the *Sba bzhed*. For these reasons, it cannot be dated on the same bases that one may date the *Sba bzhed/ Dba' bzhed* itself, whose core narrative traditions ultimately go back to the founding of Bsam yas Monastery (Sørensen 1994: 10–14). At the earliest, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* dates to the end of the "intermediate period." Both temporally, and, as we shall see, thematically, it forms a fascinating contrast with the earlier materials just reviewed.
[71]

III. Irony and Polemic in the "Account of the Food-Provisioning [for the Dead]" (*Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*)

The "Account of the Food-Provisioning [for the Dead]" (*Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*) evinces an extremely complex relationship with ritual narrative forms. It offers an account of a legendary debate between a Bon po, Mchims Btsan bzher legs gzigs, and a Buddhist, Vairocana, about how to perform the funeral of Emperor Khri Srong lde brtsan (742—c.800). The Buddhists win the debate, the funeral is performed in a Buddhist way, and this is presented as the charter for performing Buddhist funerals. One element of the prescribed funerals is food-offerings to the dead (*zas gtad*), hence the name of the text.

As in the case of the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," the whole of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* is a charter myth that bears some resemblance to traditional ritual narrative forms. It introduces the time, setting, and *dramatis personae*, presents the crisis and its resolution, and states the account's relevance to the present. Like the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" and the "Guide to

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105; translation mine). In the context of the surrounding passage, which gives the textual basis for Buddhist funerals, this reference to *gter* most likely indicates Bon texts. It is also interesting in terms of "treasure texts" that the *Zas gtad* states that several Buddhist texts were translated from Sanskrit under Emperor Mu ne btsan po, and that some of these "were hidden in a black leather box (*bse sgrom nag po*) in the dBu rtse zangs khang (the copper palace in bSam yas)" (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 104). This could be taken to imply that the funeral rites for which the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* forms the charter myth were imagined to have been unearthed from this black box, though this is not stated explicitly.
There is a voluminous literature on "revealed treasures," "treasure texts," and *gter ma* that I will not summarize here. Suffice it to say that the earliest attested textual revelations probably date to the early eleventh century; see Davidson 2005: 225.

the Land of the Gods," it champions the use of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra* and the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī,* among others, for funeral rites. As with these other Buddhist narratives, this is not a template for a mimetic ritual, but a charter myth that explains the triumph of these rites over "black Bon funerals." The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* differs, however, in a few very important respects. First, whereas the "Substitution Text" transforms traditional funerals and undermines them "from within," and the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" and the "Guide to the Land of the Gods" offer competing alternatives, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* is entirely dismissive of its non-Buddhist competitors. Second, while these earlier Buddhist narratives, like ritual antecedent tales, narrated the exploits of mythological figures, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* polemicist chose historical figures as his *dramatis personae*. We shall return to this latter point after examining in detail the rhetorical strategies by which the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* dismisses and degrades its (imagined) opponents.

The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* doubles as a charter myth and a polemic. The latter aspect is expressed in the familiar form of a debate. This allows the polemicist to put his opponent's argument in the mouth of a villain, and roundly defeat it through the words of his champion. In such a set-up one expects a *tour de force*, and the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* does not disappoint. Mchims Btsan bzher legs zigs argues in favor of performing Bon funerals, worshipping tombs, and supplicating mountain deities – essentially a succinct statement of what the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* polemicist imagines to have been, or erects as, the traditional status quo against which the Buddhists had to struggle. It is particularly interesting that Mchims Btsan bzher evokes Tibet's traditional constitutional mythology in terms similar to that found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and the eulogies of imperial-period pillar inscriptions.[34] He evokes the [72] descent of the first king in a verse that overlaps with one found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.[35] He then recounts the origin of funeral rites, but, in a display that reveals the polemicist's ignorance of his opponents' beliefs, claims that these came about not during the time of Dri gum btsan po and Spu de gung rgyal, but during that of Lha tho tho ri snyan shal.[36] Mchims Btsan bzher continues by valorizing the

[34] I borrow the term "constitutional mythology" from Martin Mills, who uses it to describe how traditional Tibetan "religious histories" such as the *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, and particularly the myth of Srong brtsan sgam po (c.605–649), serve as "a *means* for people in general to constitute their understanding of legitimate governance and history" (Mills 2009; italics in original).

[35] The *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (in the *Royal Genealogy*) states, "Even the trunks of the trees strained to the utmost. Even the springs rippled on their banks. Even the boulders and so forth saluted elegantly and thoughtfully" (*shing sdong po yang bang thang thang / chab lu ma yang dngo sil sIl / gor pha bong la stsogs pa yang mnyed khrung khrung gis pyag 'tshal lo;* PT 1286, ll. 33–34; Bacot, *et al*. 1940-1946: 86). The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* reads, "The trees used to bow their bodies, the solid boulders used to jump" (*shing sdong po ni sku dud dud / gor pha bong ni 'phar thang thang*; 27a, l. 7; Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 97–98, n. 387).

[36] That Lha tho tho ri has been substituted for Dri gum btsan po and Spu de gung rgyal is clear from the transmission and corruption of an already corrupt tradition concerning Spu de gung rgyal. The latter, according to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, was known as Grang mo gnam gser brtsig when he died:

"The son of Dri gum btsan po was Spu de gung rgyal, [who was between] the seven heavenly Dri [and] the six earthly Legs. When living, [he was called] Spu de gung rgyal. When he died, [he was called] Grang mo gnam gser brtsig" (*dri gum btsan po 'i sras / / spu de gung rgyal gnam la dri*

worship of the royal tombs and the royal divinities such as the mountain god Yar lha sham po. He then recalls the Yarlung Kingdom's conquest of the minor kingdoms, its rapid expansion, its "lofty realm" (*srid mtho*) and "traditional art of governance" (*gtsug lag*).[37] Allowing Buddhist monks to perform the royal funeral, argues Mchims Btsan bzher, would be to risk endangering the traditional order of things, and would disrupt the realm (*chab srid*) (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 97–99).

The allusions to, and near quotations of, traditions found in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, are also found in Vairocana's response. Here the tenor changes to one of mockery, however, particularly when Vairocana references traditional ritual narrative [73] forms. Vairocana's counter-argument unfavorably contrasts tombs, palaces, and the royal mountain god Yar lha Sham po with Nālanda Monastery in India, Buddhist pure lands such as Bde ba can and Padma can, and the Protectors of the Three Families (*rigs gsum mgon po*), including Vajrapāṇi. It is the most succinct statement one could imagine for how one replaces imperial cosmology and palladia with those of Buddhism. The rhetorical heart of Vairocana's rebuttal is a mock "catalogue of ritual antecedent tales" that forms a contrast with the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*'s "Account of the Minor Kings." As in a traditional redactional outline, the tale set in the first setting is given in full, and those that follow are compressed. It begins as follows:

> To say that *gtsug lag* and the rites and diagnoses on Bon are good is also a falsehood. Khri 'phang gsum, king of Zing po rje, worshipped the compassionless god Thang lha yar lha. The two Ag gshen [priests] of 'Phan yul killed many animals, such as yaks, sheep, and horses. 'Drir 'grin and Gco mi and others, the *'dre* demons that want burnt offerings and the *bon* that want iron – many gathered together.[38] Because he added subsequent ones to his previous misdeeds, and practiced a false religion, his bondservants Nyang, Sbas, and Gnon – the three –, with Tshe spong the messenger making four, along with his stronghold, Khung lung rgyab bu snang, were gathered under the dominion of Spu rgyal Tibet.

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bdun / sa le legs drug bshos na / spu de gung rgyal grongs na / / grang mo gnam gser brtsig / gser brtsig gI sras; PT 1286, ll. 48–49; see also Zeisler 2011: 194–200). The verb *bshos*, which means "to procreate" in every other appearance in the genealogy, accounts for past mistranslations of this passage, and also for the *Zas gtad*'s transformation of a posthumous name into a bride: "Lha tho tho ri snyan shal united with Grang lung gyi Gung sman, and Grang lung gyi gung sman performed his funeral" (*lha tho tho ri snyan shal dang grang lung gi gung sman du bshos te/ gtong 'dad gtong ba yang grang lung gi gung sman gyis gtong ngo //*; *Dba' bzhed*, 27v2; Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 98). The projection of this new, Buddhist ancestor into the genealogy is but one example of a long process by which the genealogy adapted to evolving political realities.

[37] *Gtsug lag* is a polyvalent term that refers, in a constitutional context, to traditional governance and the traditional order of things. It can also mean divination, and it can refer to fundamental texts; see Stein 2010: 182–87 and Hahn 1997: 353–54.

[38] This appears to be a corruption of a passage similar to that found in the "Substitution Text": According to the treatises of the black men, the custom of the black funerals, the origin narratives (*smrang*) for which the *bon* (priest) wants a fee, and the tales (*rabs*) for which the demons want burnt offerings…" (*myI nag po 'i gzhung/ /shId nag po 'i lugs/ /bon yas 'dod smrang/ /'dre gsur 'dod gyI rabs las/*; cf. above).

bon gyi lto dpyad dang gtsug lag legs bgyi ba de'ang sho pe ba lags te / zing po'i rgyal po khri 'phang gsuM gyis lha snying rje med pa'i thang lha yar lha gsol/ 'phan yul gyi ^ag gshen rnaM 2 kyis gnags lug dang rta lasvo pa dud 'gro mang po ni bsad / 'drir 'grin dang gco mi lasvo pa 'dre gsur 'dod dang / bon lcags 'dod mang po bsags/ sdig lnga ma'i steng du phyi ma mnan ste 'khrul pa'i chos la spyad pas kho'i bran nyang sbas gnon dang 3 / tshe spongs 'phrin dang bzhi mkhar khung lung rgyab bu snang dang chas nas spu rgyal bod kyi mnga' ris su 'dus pa lags te de lto che zhing zhal bsod pa lags saM; *Dba' bzhed*, 29v2–6.

Vairocana's redactional outline then briefly repeates the same basic narrative in the settings of the kingdoms of Zhang zhung, 'A zha, Mchims Dwags po, and Snubs. Like 'Phan yul, each fell to Tibet / Spu rgyal as a result of worshipping Bon po gods, sacrificing animals, and performing "black Bon funerals" (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 101–03). After finishing with the final setting, Vairocana gives a short statement of relevance: "Because of such major sins it is improper to perform funerals according to the Bon system" (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 103). Mchims Btsan bzher retorts [74] in disbelief with rhetorical questions that ask if Vairocana would have it that the monks will now control all secular and military affairs. To this Vairocana triumphantly announces, "We monks can do it!" The Buddhists have won the debate, and Vairocana and others perform Khri Srong lde brtsan's funeral in a Buddhist fashion.

Vairocana's mock account of the minor kingdoms is a polemic within a polemic. From its garbled, yet recognizable quotation of a similar anti-*bon* polemic of the type found in the "Substitution Text," it is clearly belongs to a tradition of polemics that target "black Bon funerals." It is also clearly familiar with the traditions that inform the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. Vairocana refers to how the subjects of the ruler Khri 'phang gsum, "Nyang, Sbas, and Gnon – the three –, with Tshe spongs the messenger making four," fell under the power of Spu rgyal Bod. This is the standard phrase used to describe these four clans in the context of their formative role in the creation of the Tibetan Empire when they defected from Zing po rje Khri pangs sum, narrated in the third and fourth chapters of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (Bacot, *et al*. 1940-1946: 134–39).[39]

The *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*'s allusions to the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* or to closely related narratives brings Vairocana's "mock catalogue" into conversation with the "Account of the Minor Kings" discussed above. The latter uses the redactional outline form to evoke an image of totality over which the Tibetan emperor asserts dominion. It overlaps closely with "catalogues of ritual antecedents" that set a crisis and its resolution, e.g., healing the sick, in each setting. In that case, one cannot safely claim that the *Chronicle* borrowed the form from ritual texts or vice-versa, since they may each be drawing on a common, shared topos. Here, however, Vairocana's relationship to the catalogue of ritual antecedents form is clear: it is the object of his parody. Despite using the same settings and the same redactional outline form as in the catalogues of ritual antecedents, Vairocana's catalogue gives antecedents for failure rather than

[39] Uray (1967: 500) takes the appearance of this same phrase in the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* to be "a paraphrase of the sentence quoted from the Ziṅ-po-rǰe Narrative" in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

antecedents for success. Kingdom after kingdom failed because its king supported "black Bon funerals," and these antecedents, taken together, inform us that such a funeral performed for Emperor Khri Srong lde brtsan can only have the same malefic effect. Vairocana has self-consciously appropriated a ritual narrative form associated with his opponents, and in so doing he has also disfigured it. Rather than arraying antecedents for ritual success in a sequential narration, he presents antecedents of failure. In one sense, Vairocana has beaten the Bon po at their own game, like an atheist quoting scripture to Christians by way of rebutting Christian views. On the other hand, his "mock catalogue" inverts the logic of the catalogue of ritual antecedent tales, and stands in relation to them as the Black Mass does to the Catholic Mass.

The rhetorical strategy of disfiguration and irony is also evident in Vairocana's pun at the end of his account of 'Phan yul's conquest in the first narrative setting. He [75] asks, "*lto che zhing zhal bsod pa lags saM*?" This use of the term *lto* by Buddhists to belittle Bon po opponents refers to the Bon po use of the homophonous *gto* rites and *dpyad* rites as a key element of the rituals that they perform in order to earn their livelihoods (Karmay 2010: 54). It is through *gto* rites and *dpyad* rites, so the pun goes, that a Bon po becomes wealthy and acquires a big belly (*lto che,* a homophone with *gto dpyad*).[40] Such humorous wordplay is a familiar rhetorical strategy. Considering examples such as "the Rabbinic deformation of *euangelion*, in the sense of the Christian Gospels, into '*aven gilayon*' or '*avon gilayon*', a kind of nonsense phrase but suggesting something like 'falsehood/perversion of blank parchment'," Philip Alexander writes of deformation or parody that it "is a witty put-down that not only expresses disapproval and devalues what the opponent holds dear but invites the hearer to disassociate himself from the butt of this humour" (Alexander 2008: 86). These conclusions certainly apply to Vairocana's argument and to the rhetoric of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*.

BON PO RHETORIC ON BUDDHIST APPROPRIATION

This sort of mockery is far removed from the adaptation of the traditional funeral rites in the "Substitution Text." Within the mode of ironic subversion espoused by the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* one can hardly imagine Buddhist willingness to make use of Bon ritual and narrative technologies for anything other than derision. Considering their generally ambivalent approach to non-Buddhist ritual narratives, and the Buddhist backgrounding of even their own, rival charter myths such as the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," one can read the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* in the context of polemics not only about funerals, but about the place of narrative in Tibetan ritual. In this context, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* might be in dialogue with criticisms that Buddhists were appropriating *bon* / Bon ritual narrative forms. We find exactly this charge in the *Bsgrags pa gling grags*, a sort of expanded "Bon anti-*Sba bzhed*" whose action also takes place mostly during the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan. In its account of a

[40] A similar pun seems to work with *zhal bsod pa*: it literally means "to please the face," and the near-homophone *zhal gso ba* can mean "to repair," but also, and perhaps more to the point here, "to feed your face."

Buddhist versus Bon po conflict set during this emperor's reign, Bon pos first defeat Padmasambhava in a contest involving magical killing and resurrection, and show him to be an underhanded charlatan. Then they defeat the Buddhists in a debate in which Dran pa Nam mkha' criticizes Buddhists for their lack of a narrative element in their religious system:

> "Instead of merely fixing your mind on nothing but non-conceptualization, do you, like Bon, have antecedent tales (*dpe*) and stories (*lo rgyus*) to tell in order to benefit beings? … If you have no story of the origin, then you have no method of performing funeral rituals for the dead."
>
> [76] *khyod mi rtog pa tsaM la blo gtad pa tsaM las / 'gro don byed pa la dpe dang lo rgyus bon gzhin bshad rgyu yodaM /… byung khungs lo rgyus med pas shi ba 'dur thabs med; G.yung drung bon gyi sgra bsgrags pa rin po che'i gling grags* (from the Bon *Bka' 'gyur*), folio 37b, ll. 3–4, or "page" 74 in the Arabic numbering.[41]

In his summation, Dran pa Nam mkha' accuses the Buddhists of appropriating Bon ritual technologies: "As there are no discourses on funeral rites in the discourses of Dharma, you have appropriated the model of Eternal Bon, and now, without any shame, you lead beings" (*chos kyi lung las 'dur lung ma byung pas / gyung drung gi bon la dpe blang nas / skye bo khrid phyigs ngo tsha med /; G.yung drung bon gyi sgra bsgrags pa rin po che'i gling grags* (from the Bon *Bka' 'gyur*), folio 38a, l. 4).

These are charges to which the Bon pos obviously believed the Buddhists were vulnerable. One need not even read between the lines to suppose that Dran pa nam mkha' is taking aim at something like the "Substitution Text" or the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death": in passage further on in the *Bsgrags pa gling grags* we find a list of Buddhist texts supposedly plagiarized from Bon, including the *Rta g.yag gi gtad yar* ("The Ritual Loading of the Horse and Yak"), and *Lha bu rin chen gyi shi rabs* ("The Tale of the Death of the Divine Son Rin chen"), and the *'Dod khams su lam btsen pa* ("Guide to the Desire Realm"). Buddhist monks, we are told, used Bon po texts as models, and transformed them by giving them Buddhist names (*bon rnams chos su ming stags la bsgyur ro*).[42] These three titles correspond rather well to the "Substitution Text," the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," and the "Guide to the Land of the Gods," even if the corresponding title for the latter is probably satirical.[43] The name of the "Tale of the Death of the Divine Son Rin chen" obviously refers to the protagonist of

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[41] The same passage begins at folio 65a (63a in the Arabic numbering), l. 3 of the "Oslo version," the *Bon chos dar nub gi lo rgyus grags pa rin chen gling grags ces bya ba/ dmongs pa blo'i gsal byed*. The latter is virtually identical with the account given in the *dbu can Bon chos dar nub kyi lo rgyus bsgrags pa rin chen gling grags zhes bya ba dmongs pa'i blo'i gsal byed*, whose account starts at folio 60a, l. 4.

[42] *Bon chos dar nub gi lo rgyus grags pa rin chen gling grags,* 72a5–b2 (70a in the Arabic numbering), and *Bsgrags pa rin po che'i gling grags* (from the Bon *Bka' 'gyur)*, 41b (p. 82), ll. 2–4.

[43] The first title recalls a line in the "Substitution Text" from the long passage translated above: "…having well loaded the psychopomp sheep,…" (*skyib lug legs par gtad pas*).

the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," but it evidently takes it that he, and not his father, is the deceased. It is also interesting that this charter myth should be targeted for charges of plagiarism, since it is essentially a Tibetan apocryphal sutra based on the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* and the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra* (Imaeda 2007: 171). If it is not the content that is at issue, perhaps it is the use of narrative as an important element of ritual that the Buddhists are accused of appropriating. What may lie behind these charges, therefore, is an [77] unease not only about Buddhist plagiarism of the contents of Bon po rites, but Buddhist appropriation of ritual narrative forms.

Juxtaposing the polemics of Vairocana and Dran pa nam mkha' – or rather those of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* and the *Bsgrags pa gling grags* – they almost appear as if they are in dialogue. Vairocana's polemic would seem to overturn Dran pa nam mkha's two main points: he dismisses "antecedent tales and stories" by disfiguring them, and argues that it is the Bon funerals, and not the Buddhist ones, which are false rites. Vairocana's dismissal of the ritual antecedent tale form also inoculates the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* against Dran pa nam mkha's charge of appropriating Bon po ritual technologies, a point to which its predecessors such as the "Substitution Text" and the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" may have been seen to be vulnerable. Whether these competing Bon and Buddhist accounts of conflict over funerary practices are in fact in dialogue remains to be determined through text-critical studies of the *Sba bzhed / Dba' bzhed,* the *Bsgrags pa gling grags*, and related texts.

Ritual Antecedent Tales and Charter Myths in Relation to Histories

Despite its parody of ritual antecedent narrative forms, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* is itself a charter myth. Like the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death," it uses narrative to provide a justification for the use of specific Buddhist funeral rituals. Indeed, when we consider the basic plot outlines, the narrative's contours superficially resemble those of a traditional ritual antecedent tale: Khri Srong lde brtsan's funeral is to be performed in Brag dmar; false priests arrive and fail (or are overcome); the exemplary priest Vairocana performs the funeral; and funerals are now to be performed in a Buddhist manner. Rather than deploying the mythical kings and priests who populate traditional ritual antecedent tales, however, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* takes historical figures and casts them as characters in a tale whose form and outcome is predetermined. This is a very important shift, and one that is relevant not only to such "accounts" (*lo rgyus*) and charter myths, but to developments in Tibetan approaches to historical narrative in, for example, the *chos 'byung* and *rgyal rabs* genres.

Of course the strategies present in the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* are the result of developments over time. When the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* was composed, the narrative topoi found in ritual antecedent tales were a central part of Tibetan cultural production. The *Chronicle*'s composers naturally drew on these in their narrations, as in the "Account of the Minor Kings" and the episode of Princess Sad mar kar, which is framed within a matrimonial narrative trope (Macdonald 1971: 263–65; Uray 1972: 35–36; Dotson 2013b: 62; Dotson forthcoming). By the time of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*, such narrative forms were no longer part of

a common cultural heritage, but were associated with an increasingly marginalized group, and Buddhists drew on other, separate narrative models. This ascendant epistème was read back anachronistically into imperial period, and imperial-period idealogies, e.g. "traditional art of governance" (*gtsug lag*), were conflated with Bon, and demonized. [78]

The relationship of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* to history brings us back to the physicality of the document, and specifically to its position at the end of the *Dba' bzhed*. Given its statement of relevance to funeral rites, we might expect the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* to appear near the beginning of, or as an addendum to a manual for funeral rites. So what is it doing here, at the end of the "historical" narrative of the coming of Buddhism to Tibet and the foundation of Bsam yas Monastery? To brush aside the question, we might say that the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* is simply out of place, and is essentially there by accident. If we take its placement at the end of the *Dba' bzhed* seriously, however, then we must come up with another solution, one that considers that the *Zas gtad* may be doing something else besides underwriting the practice of Buddhist funerals. As we have seen, it is not only a polemic about funerals, but also a polemic about narrative. The allusions to and near-quotations of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* place Vairocana's mock account of minor kingdoms in dialogue with that of the *Chronicle* or closely related narrative traditions. It is as if the two "catalogues" form a symmetry of the type preferred by Tibetan historians, where Vairocana's ironic disfiguration of the catalogue of antecedents form effectively closes a chapter of Tibetan narrative historiography that began with the type of "innocent" use of shared narrative forms that we find in the *Old Tibetan Chronicl*e. This is not the same sort of narrative symmetry whereby the empire, created from the chaos of the minor kingdoms, devolves into the chaos of the regional principalities; it is not the unraveling of the silken knot of the empire's religious laws and the breaking of the golden yoke of its royal laws;[44] it is not that irony has replaced innocence in a benighted time. Rather, the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* refutes one vision of imperial power and harmony and confidently replaces it with another. Vairocana's "ironic catalogue" is in this sense a leitmotif for the deactivation of those putative imperial-period ideologies that do not accord with emerging post-imperial religio-political identities. One of its strategies, as we have seen, is to label as "Bon po" those remembered or imagined elements of earlier imperial ideologies that have now become objectionable. It is in this sense a charter myth for a new sort of narrative of the imperial period, very much of a piece with that found in the *Dba' bzhed* that precedes it.

Conclusions

Tibetan polemics about funerals are also polemics about the place of narrative in ritual. Examining early Tibetan ritual antecedent tales (*rabs*) and

[44] For these instances of symmetry and for others, mostly drawn from the *chos 'byungs* of Lde'u and Jo sras Lde'u, see Vitali 2004: 109–10, nn. 5–6. On the symmetry of the minor kingdoms and the "regional principalities," see Dotson 2012: 171.

redactional outlines, we can almost discern the script of the rituals that they purport to accompany and underpin. The narrative topoi can expand and contract, suspending the inevitable resolution in the same way that the manifold elements of a ritual can postpone the [79] *denouement* of its climax. Briefly surveying such tales, we have demonstrated how they are constructed, and how a sub-genre, the "catalogue of ritual antecedent tales," reduces the tales to redactional outlines in order to array them in meaningful ways to convey directionality and/or totality. Faced with these narratives, and their central role in funeral rituals in particular, Buddhists adopted a number of strategies. When it was necessary, perhaps due to the expectations of clients, to use the broad outlines of the traditional rite, Buddhists transformed its individual elements in order to avoid animal sacrifice. They also drew on their own narrative repertoire, as in the case of the insertion of the story of Bālāha in the "Substitution Text." Another strategy was to perform Buddhist funeral rites according to the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra* and other canonical texts. In this case, however, the Buddhists also composed narratives that gave the background for these rituals and effectively functioned as charter myths. We see this in the case of the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death." Moving forward in time, we find a further rhetorical strategy of parody and dismissal. In the "Account of the Food Provisioning [for the Dead]" (*Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*), the traditional "catalogue of ritual antecedent tales" form is transformed into a catalogue of antecedents of failure that disprove, rather than underwrite, the efficacy of Bon funerals. While using the catalogue form to disprove his opponent's argument, the polemicist simultaneously mocks the relevance of this form by debasing it. This strategy of disfiguring traditional ritual narrative forms, which were by then associated with the Bon po, also addressed charges that the Buddhists were stealing proprietary ritual narrative technology.

With a few nods to Tibetan narrative forms, the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" draws largely on Indian Buddhist narratives. The outlines of its two main sources, the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* and *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana tantra,* already include setting, crisis, resolution, and a statement of relevance. The same can be said for any number of Indian Buddhist sutras and tantras, not to mention all sorts of other narratives (Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 293–94). Viewed in the context of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, these, like the Tibetan enthusiasm for the myth of Rudra, are examples of how Tibet selectively assimilated and subtly transformed certain elements of Buddhism. From this perspective, Buddhist narrative moved towards the indigenous model, in which narrative was more than just a preliminary to ritual. The "Story of the Cycle of Life and Death" is a product of this movement. By the time of the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*, such accommodations created a sense of unease among Buddhists, and gave rise to Bon po charges that Buddhists plagiarized their use of ritual antecedent tales. Looked at from the perspective of Tibetan ritual and religion in an inclusive sense, and beginning from our earliest sources, however, texts like the "Story of the Cycle of Birth and Death" and the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus* are periodic signposts of a long process by which the role of narrative in ritual was diminished. While these may be charter myths, and models of exemplary ritual practice to the extent that the *Bsgrags pa gling grags* targeted them as instances of Buddhist appropriation of Bon po ritual narrative traditions, they do not claim to be templates or models for mimetic [80] ritual in the same was as the ritual

antecedent tales do. The general trend, then, appears to be one in which Buddhism's move from the periphery to the center of Tibetan religious life was accompanied by a diminution of the role of narrative in Tibetan ritual. Like the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism, this was and is a long and incomplete process.

Works Cited

ITJ 489	Fragmentary anti-*bon* polemic (from same text as ITJ 562)
ITJ 493	Fragment of "Substitution Text"
ITJ 504	Fragment of "Substitution Text"
ITJ 562	Fragmentary anti-*bon* polemic
ITJ 731	"Tale of the Separation of the Horse and the Wild Ass"
ITJ 734	Long scroll containing ransom (*glud*) rites
ITJ 738	Dice divination text
ITJ 990	Buddhist catachism/ anti-*bon* polemic
PT 126	Small scroll containing *'Phrul kyi byig shus phyi ma la bstan pa'i mdo* and "The envoy of Phyva to Dmu"
PT 239	"Substitution Text"
PT 1040	"Tale of the *Rgyal byin*"
PT 1060	A ritual text involving horses
PT 1068	"Tale of the Yak-Ox Hybrid" (*mdzo rabs*)
PT 1134	Funerary texts, including the "Tale of Lhe'u Yang ka' rje"
PT 1136	Scroll including the "Tale of Rma myi de btsun po's Blood Brotherhood" and the "Tale of Lho rgyal Byang mo tsun"
PT 1286	The "Royal Genealogy," properly a part of the *Chronicle*
PT 1287	The *Old Tibetan Chronicle*

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OBSERVATIONS ON PAINTED COFFIN PANELS OF THE TIBETAN EMPIRE

AMY HELLER

It is well established that, during the Tibetan Empire, ritual burial in tombs was practiced for members of the Tibetan aristocracy throughout Tibet. This is attested by extant monumental tombs in the royal necropolis in ’Phyong rgyas, as well as those in Lha rtse and Dulan.[1] Although coffins painted with narrative scenes have so far only been excavated from tombs in the Dulan region,[2] all these sites share the following distinctive characteristics which allow the formulation of a unique typology of Tibetan tomb architecture and burial practices:

1) Several tombs clustered together shaped as trapezoid, square or semi-spherical mounds. In some cases, a superstructure, i.e. a second mound shaped as a smaller trapezoid or square, is constructed above the initial tomb.[3]
2) Construction materials consist of rammed earth alternating in layers with cut stones, as well as unbaked bricks alternating in layers with cut stones, in both cases reinforced with wooden beams at roof or ceiling juncture.
3) Rows of 3 or 5 trenches for sacrifice of horses in front of the main tombs,[4] ancillary pits for burial of dogs, sheep, yak and goats.
4) The combination of a stone stele *rdo ring* and two statues of crouched stone lions ca.100 cm high[5] in proximity to the largest tombs appears to indicate political authority of the deceased.[6]

Another common characteristic of Tibetan burial practices of this period may well be the use of painted wooden coffins. At present, no complete wooden coffins have been excavated in central Tibet, insofar as very few controlled excavations have been made.[7] However, although the Lha rtse Khrom chen tombs have not been excavated, fragments of painted coffins have been found in three sites in western Tibet as well as in Mustang.[8] In Gansu, there has been a fortuitous recovery of painted fragments of the lateral panels of Tibetan wooden coffins bearing representations of the animals of the twelve year calendar cycle, and an end panel showing a doorway with two guardian warriors.[9] In Guolimu county, Qinghai, in 2002, three painted coffins were revealed during the excavation of two rectangular vertical pit graves with a passageway leading to the tombs. One was a larger grave enclosure containing a wooden coffin (joint burial of a male and female couple), while the other was an earth pit sealed with cypress boards which was a secondary burial, in which bones were placed inside a small coffin enclosed within a larger coffin. The presence of a lacquer sword scabbard suggested the occupant

of the tomb had been a warrior. To either side of the joint burial, skeletons of a complete horse and complete camel were found, indicative of animal sacrifice. There were also tall pottery jars, a bow case, a quiver, a wooden horse saddle, wooden birds, many silks imported from Sogdiana, Central Asia and China.

According to Xu Xinguo, director of the Qinghai Provincial Cultural Relics and Archaeology Institute who conducted the investigation jointly with Haixi Prefectural Ethnology Museum, the lateral panels of the three painted coffins feature a range of significant events. These include hunting, banquets, receptions, tributary missions and commercial activities focussed around the round tent (a yurt) of the male and female occupants, indicative of their royal status, while their high turbans and garments follow models known from portraits of Tibetan people in Dunhuang murals.[10] In Xu's opinion, the general iconography follows a familar repertoire in Chinese tombs, whether for coffins or mural paintings, but Xu Xinguo maintains that the central figures are a *btsan po* and his queen.[11] Other archaeologists developed different theories of the identity of the people buried and the ethnic affiliation of the couple and their entourage depicted on the coffins, and identified them alternatively as Tuyuhun, Tibetans, or Supi[12] (see below). The principal themes painted on the end panels of the coffins show hybrid creatures—animals and birds—such as Xu had already encountered on fragmentary wooden panels recovered during the 1985-1990 excavations of the main tomb at Dulan (Xu Xinguo, *China Art and Archeaology Digest* 1996), while the lateral panels have narrative scenes such as: several hunting scenes of reindeer and wild yak; slaughter of yak by archers; arrival of foreign envoys; ceremonial banquets taking place in tent encampments; amorous scenes; a commercial caravan of camels; and, mourning and funerary rituals (Xu Xinguo and Liu Xiaohe 2003; Xu Xinguo/B. Doar 2005; Luo Shiping 2006, Tong Tao and P. Wertmann 2010). Subsequently, other painted lateral coffin panels depicting people engaged in similar activities and wearing similar attire, as well as panels with decorative motifs of animals of the calendar cycle have been discovered.[13]

In the context of this seminar of the Lumbini International Research Institute, convened to examine the fragmentation and reconstruction of society and religion in post-imperial Tibet, the objective of the present research is to pursue the analysis of the narrative and ritual themes represented on the painted coffins in order to determine to what extent these panels constitute concrete documentation of the mobile habitat of the *btsan po* and his entourage during the sPu rgyal dynasty. The study of the women and men portrayed on these panels—their activities, weapons, cooking utensils and drinking vessels, costumes, jewelry and face make-up, and the accoutrements of their habitat—may yield clues to better understanding of daily life in ancient Tibet among the aristocracy and their entourage.

In particular, the performance of certain dances and funerary rituals represented on these coffin panels will be examined in comparison with the decorative imagery sculpted in relief on a contemporaneous Tibetan artefact in silver, a large vessel *chang snod* now conserved in central Tibet, revered as one of the most sacred

historical relics in the Lhasa gtsug lag khang,[14] as well as in comparison with the Buddhist imagery of mourning rituals of the Buddha and post-mortem paradise scenes from mural paintings from Dunhuang and Anxi, Yulin (cave 25) painted during the Tibetan occupation. Lastly, the scenes on the painted coffin panels from Tibetan tombs exhibit many parallels with representations of oathing, mourning, horse processions, dance and mortuary rituals sculpted on stone and marble funerary couches made for Sogdian *sabao* (diplomat-cum-merchant) who died in China in the second half of the 6th century to mid- 7th century, and which stem from a cultural crossroads of Indo-Iranian and Zoroastrian themes as understood in China,[15] as well as direct influence from the religious and artistic themes painted on murals in the Afrasiab palace of Samarkand and temples in Panjikent, Sogdiana (Marshak 2002). The analysis of the themes represented on the Tibetan painted coffin panels and their comparisons reflect the complex interface of multi-cultural exchange during the Tibetan Empire and its aftermath. This research raises questions about the degree to which Tibetan ritual practices and iconographic representations accurately reflect these manifold influences, and how the Tibetans progressively integrated such diversity in their gradual formulation of the more cohesive religious practices that characterize the *phyi dar* period.

My remarks are to be taken as a *contrapunto* to the research by two Chinese archaeologists, Tong Tao, of Beijing archaeological institute, and Huo Wei, of The Centre for Tibetan Studies of Sichuan University, who, independently of my research, both briefly evoked comparisons of Sogdian narratives with the themes represented on the Tibetan coffin panels (Huo Wei 2007b, Tong Tao 2008: 184). Tong in particular expressed that he had explored Xianbei, Tibetan Bonpo and Central Chinese connections, but that the impact of Central Asian influences were yet to be examined in detail (Tong and Wertmann 2010: 21). It is precisely the Sogdian influences which predominate, in my understanding of the imagery of these painted coffin panels, although many of the people represented wear Tibetan costumes, which reflect the identities of the former occupants of these coffins.

I. The coffin panels

Let us first examine the coffin now conserved in a private collection and then review the scenes on the three published coffin panels. Most of these coffin panels measure roughly 220 cm x 70 cm for lateral panels and 60 square cm for the end panels, although some are fragmentary and, in one case, the whole coffin is smaller in scale (see Diagram 1)

The general shape is a rectangular solid. However, the upper section has three long wooden panels. The two upper panels adjacent to the lateral panels have paintings of the twelve animals of the Tibetan calendar cycle, six on each side. It is to be noted that a black boar is substituted for the pig. For the year of the bird, the Chinese calendar uses the rooster, while the Tibetan calendar used the hen.[16] In these panels

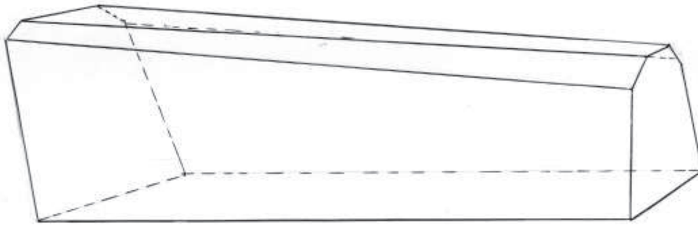


Diagram 1. General construction of the Tibetan coffin, private collection (sketch by Jean-Michel Terrier)

the bird has very long tail feathers, but does not have the comb on the top of the head, nor waddles, thus it is to be identified as a hen.

The End panels

Each end panel portrays two hybrid creatures in a floral and vine surround of broad swathes of color, with alternating pale and deep blue tones. The background of the entire panel is striped in blue and white. In the first panel, inside tones of crimson, pink and white honeysuckle florets with accents of white and deep blue, a blue phoenix with red neck may be discerned in the center, extending full wings of crimson, deep blue and white plumage. It stands elegantly poised on one leg above the head of a grimacing white hybrid feline creature, a lion-griffin, part lion and part bird, whose horns recall the horned crown which is a mark of divinity of such creatures in the ancient Near East.[17] This white creature has red ears, bulging eyes, small curving white horns emerging from the crown of his head, and wings, again with plumage in hues of crimson, deep blue, medium blue and white. The bird is painted from a frontal perspective, while the feline is painted from a fore-shortened view, only the head—no body—but protruding from his neck one may see two short front paws with blue claws (Fig. 1).[18] The second panel has the same background of blue and white stripes, and a floral motif of stylized green and deep blue lotus blossoms with curving vines above a sinister scene where a serpent has coiled around a pale green hybrid feline creature, the rest of the serpent's body forming a circle to constrain the creature. Their two heads are confronted, the mouths agape as if growling in the center of the circle of coils. The hybrid feline creature appears to have the head of a dog or a jackal, a lion's body and thick furry legs with prominent claws (Fig. 2).

The paintings of these two end panels reflect the concept of the Chinese mythological group of creatures called the « Four Divine Beasts ». This group of animals, birds and hybrid creatures are revered as protective deities aligned to the four cardinal points. A well-known decorative phenomenon in Chinese coffins and tombs since the Warring States period (ca. 450 - 220 B.C.), the standard group of four

consists of the Blue Dragon, White Tiger, Vermilion Bird and the Black Hunter, ch. *xuan wu* (a composite creature comprising an intertwined snake and turtle).

In the four coffins excavated at Guolimo county, the Vermilion Bird and the Black Hunter were represented on two end panels.[19] In the present coffin, on the contrary, while the inspiration for four creatures is a parallel to the Chinese model, there is also clear differentiation due to the emphasis on hybrid felines: the white hybrid feline substitutes for the white tiger, and rather than the characteristic red color of the Vermilion Bird, the phoenix is blue with multi-color plumage, the dragon and the composite snake-turtle creature are replaced by the snake coiled around the green hybrid feline. This inclusion of hybrid felines disrupts the Chinese model of the protective deities of the four directions, tending to suggest aesthetic influences derived from western Central Asia, where hybrid creatures are a frequent theme in Sogdian and Sasanian textiles and metalwork. The vegetal border of stylized honeysuckle and lotus blossoms surrounding the creatures is frequent in Sogdian designs. A similar floral and cloud border on the Guolimo panels led Xu Xinguo to suggest that this border distinguishes them from other Tang dynasty representations of these guardians; Xu attributed this mode of framing the beasts to « influences from art further west. »[20]

The Lateral Panels

1. Size and Composition

The two panels measure, respectively, 225 x 53 cm (Panel I), and 225 x 50 cm (Panel II), at the base. Both lateral panels present a vast landscape with trees, shrubs, hills and vales in which take place several discrete narrative scenes. Each lateral panel is in fact composed of three boards held together by tenons (see Diagram 2). The three boards are not used to divide these narratives into registers. A base coat of animal glue has been applied to render the surface of the wood relatively uniform. This ensures that the panel's narratives can be fluidly composed without framing devices to delimit individual episodes, although some irregularities remain in the surface which has engendered pigment loss in those areas. Another element which enhances the continuity of the narrative episodes is the background of deep blue and white stripes throughout both lateral panels, defined at upper and lower edges by small blue mounds, as if an idealized land bordered by low mountain ranges. Within the blue stripes, delicate tufts of low grass are frequent.

The subdivisions of pictorial space are created by the various forms of life: vegetation, processions of people and mounted riders on horseback, as well as large animals, alone or in a group. Another type of subdivision is architectural space: four tents are irregularly interspersed on the panels, three are spherical, white with red appliqué detail, and one is a black trapezoid. Each tent is surrounded by clusters of people who are often seated or standing near rugs which extend the space of the narrative episode beyond the tent itself. There are also amorous couples lying down

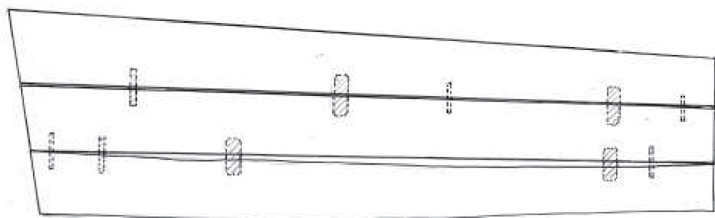


Diagram 2. Assemblage of boards of the lateral panels, private collection (sketch by Jean-Michel Terrier)

nearby. Variations in dimension of the tents and the insertion of additional figures of small kneeling and bending people as well as two small scampering dogs—the red and white mascots—add to the sense of dynamic movement throughout the space. The social differentiation of people (e.g., donors, hunters, servants, musicians) is generally not indicated by scale, but there appears to be an exception on each panel. On Panel II at far right, there is a rather tall man who seems to tower above all the other figures, seated regally on an hour-glass stool in front of a tent, his hand extended towards a smaller plump person who hands him a cup. While his size may reflect an ethnic propensity—Tibetans of the Kham region are known to be generally much taller and heavier than the inhabitants of central Tibet[21]—in consideration of his elegant garments and pose, the larger scale of this portrait appears to be an indication of social rank and, potentially, political authority. On Panel I, there may possibly be an instance of hieratic scale, if the two gentlemen wearing high ovoid black hats with a long back lappet, both with rather broad faces and hefty bodies, are to be identified as religious hierarchs or priests due to their hats and their proximity to the fire and jug of liquid beside the fire.[22] One raises a rhyton, the quintessential Iranian drinking vessel which came into widespread use in Central Asia, particularly Sodgiana, where it is used by banqueters in Panjikant.[23] The other ‘foreigner’ holds a large flat bowl.

The four panels excavated from Guolimo are relatively similar in their size and composition (see Diagram 3, 4, 5).[24] The high degree of analogy with the scenes depicted on the coffin panels of the private collection suggest similar provenance and chronological context.[25] Although their less well-preserved state of pigment conservation makes it more difficult to see all the figures, the archaeologists’ sketches of the Guolimo panels give a good idea of the general composition and arrangement of figures. Here there are also four tents, two on each panel, groups of people seated and standing beside the tents on rugs, also an amorous couple, as well as clusters of riders and animals. Again, one figure constitutes an exception in scale, in this case the tall man aiming his bow at the yak at far right. We will discuss below the identification of narrative themes represented on the panels.

Guolimo Panel I



Guolimo Panel II.



Diagram 3. Sketch of the Guolimo coffin panels I and II, first tomb, 220 cm long, 56 and 70 cm high (sketch by Luo Shiping 2006)

Guolimo Panel II,
Luo 2006.





Diagram 4. Sketch of the Guolimo coffin panel II (sketch by Tong Tao 2008)



Diagram 5. Sketch of the Guolimo coffin panel III (sketch by Tong Tao 2008)

II. Narrative Themes in the Tibetan coffin panels

1. Ribaldry and Amorous couples

- Panel I
  a. Behind tent at far left , the couple kiss, only their heads visible;
  b. In the mountains at far left, the couple is cuddling, completely nude on a rug, a man and woman observe them;
  c. In the mountains at far right, the couple embraces, still partially clothed, with bare legs and emphasis on genitalia.
- Panel II
  a. At far right, behind the standing female attendants, the couple is partially clothed, with bare legs and emphasis on genitalia.
- Guolimo Panel I
  Behind the large tent and the crowd of bystanders watching the archer aim at the yak, the couple lies kissing in the grass, their upper bodies still clothed, the legs bare; beside them a man is watching them, masturbating in a kneeling posture.[26]

The theme of 'ribaldry and amorous couples' is a comic note which is unique to these coffin panels. It is not a common feature with the Sogdian funerary couches, nor Chinese funerary paintings. In the opinion of the late Boris Marshak, it is a comic performance when the archer shoots the peaceful and undisturbed yak being fooled by his smart servant, and it would be the servant who is masturbating while seeing his master making love with his wife.[27] This kind of coarse humour is in great contrast with the solemn celebration of mourning represented here in other scenes.

2. Banquets

• Panel I, a. 'The apéritif.' At left, inside the large white tent, there is a kneeling man wearing a pale yellow robe and red turban. He holds a stem bowl while another man stands, in a similar green robe, bending in front of him as if in homage. They are to be recognized as Tibetans due to their red turbans and their loose robes with the contrasting hem and collar in the typical roundel design of Sogdian silks. A man wearing a blue robe with small monochrome roundel pattern also typical of Sogdian

silk seems to stand guard to the left of the entrance to the tent.[28] In front of this tent and below, there are two rugs (their border as if a fringed edge), each with several seated guests, represented frontally and from behind. The guests are being served from a large bowl by a male servant. On the ground between the rugs there are two large flat bowls and two stem bowls. A female servant holds a large tall blue jug, ostensibly to be used for beverages. A pair of patterned pants is suspended on poles, as if drying in the sun. Behind the tent, there is a group of three Tibetan women seated on a rug, a female servant standing beside them. They face a Tibetan man wearing a red robe, viewed from behind. His silhouette and the folds of his robes indicate that he is seated cross-legged on the ground. Beside him, a large blue jug similar to the one below for beverages and a cup on a tray. Behind the group of seated women, a person begins to divide the cadaver of a very large white goat. Possibly, this goat was to be consumed as part of the banquet, as there is a black open tent with a fire and cauldron, where two people appear to start preparation of foods to be cooked.

• Panel I, b. ‘A funerary repast’ (?). At far right, to the right of the small spherical ritual tent (see below), where the ‘priest’ has lacerated his forehead with his sword, guests are assembled, seated on rugs arranged beside a fire on the ground and a large cauldron-type jar, from which beverages are being served with a ladle. In the foreground, at left, the two men with ovoid black hats are manifestly foreign. They are differentiated by their plump physiognomy, garments and hats; one raises a rhyton, the other lifts a bowl. Opposite, there appears to be a seated woman, her long hair seen behind her shoulder. She wears a distinctive black hat, tall and narrow with broad upturned brim worn above a low red bonnet.[29] Next to her are seated two men wearing Tibetan turbans and robes, accompanied on the other side by two small seated white dogs, who gaze attentively at the guests on the opposite rug. In the background, attendants stand behind the banquet group; one approaches a large standing drum near the upper edge of the panel. (See Figure 3.)

• Panel II, a. ‘The apéritif.’ In the middle of the panel, two groups of men stand facing each other. At left, there are two horses, saddled, with no rider; beside them, one man stands (in a yellow robe) accompanied by two kneeling men. The kneeling man in a green robe is raising a rhyton to his lips. To the immediate right of the kneeling man in the yellow robe, there are three men standing on square rugs, apparently in conversation.

In the Sogdian funerary couch of the Miho Museum (see Figure 4), we see the performance of part of the Zoroastrian burial ceremony: the *sag-did* (‘glance of a dog’) fire ritual accompanied by the mourners’ face laceration. Fire was the most sacred of the elements for Zoroastrians.[30] Although not represented in murals in Sogdiana, the ritual is textually documented.[31] In these panels, the ‘funerary repast’ with face-laceration nearby and the observation of the open fire by guests and dogs

may well be an adaptation of the imagery of the Zoroastrian funerary ceremony. Although in 1952 Marcelle Lalou translated a Tibetan funerary ritual PT 1042 with a tentative interpretation of a fire offering as part of the ceremony, her interpretation still remains tentative sixty years later.[32]

3. Oaths of loyalty and betrothal; 'the cup rite'

• Panel II. 'A celebration of an oath.' This feast takes place beside the large white tent at far right of the panel. It begins with the formal greetings by two people. The large-scale man (a lord, a man of secular authority) is seated on an hour-glass stool[33] wearing a black robe with red contrasting trim, and a high narrow wide-brim black hat (see Figure 5 and Diagram 6). His hair is coiled in a small chignon at the nape of his neck. He benevolently extends his hand to greet a small plump person wearing similar robes and hat, standing in front of him. The small person has his long hair untied, but he is not unkempt. He raises a stem cup towards the seated man, who is in a higher position by virtue of his stature and his stool. It appears that this gesture is an important moment of homage to the local authority. Although their garments are similar, their physiognomy is different. Could this suggest that their meeting was a preamble to a pact of loyalty? Inside the tent, one man wearing the Tibetan turban holds a stem cup, and there is a standing attendant nearby the door of the tent. Below, there are musicians seated, playing the harp, a stringed instrument similar to a lute, and a flute, while the dancer raises one leg and one arm, in the characteristic pose of the 'Sogdian Whirl'.[34] Nearby, another seated man is holding what appears to be a pipe, but this in fact is a *sheng*, a Chinese wind instrument. He observes the dancer, as do four women standing nearby (the lady at far right simultaneously observes the cuddling couple nearby).

• Guolimo, Panel I. Inside the doorway of the tent at far right, a male and female are seated, kneeling, face to face. Each holds at heart level a white (= silver) cup in a gesture of betrothal. (Figure 6). This is a classic presentation of the 'cup rite' in a gesture of betrothal.[35] The male and female are surrounded by standing attendants who guard their tent. Beneath the tent a man raises his cup in homage, but unfortunately there is much paint loss of this area.

• Guolimo, Panel II. At far left, the doorway of the tent is surrounded by standing attendants, inside the tent, a woman stands behind the kneeling man with Tibetan turban who extends his hands to offer a *kha btags*, the ceremonial and votive scarf of the Tibetans, and he receives one in homage from the standing man. Their gesture is also analogous to the 'cup rite' of loyalty. In front of the tent, another man is seated solemnly, beside several women who prepare to serve from tall jars. There are four guests seated on another rug, with cups on the ground in front of them. To the right

of the tent, there is a group of ten women who stand, watching the exchange of ceremonial scarves.

• Guolimo, Panel III. Inside the doorway of the tent at far right, a male and female are seated, kneeling, face to face. Each holds their hands hidden in their lap. This seems to be a variation of the classic presentation of the 'cup rite' in a gesture of betrothal. The couple is surrounded by standing attendants who guard their tent. Beneath the tent, two men raise their cups in homage, beside large urns on which trays with cups are visible. Facing right, there is a man wearing a tall Tibetan turban, facing a procession of women. Facing left, there is a woman wearing a tall Tibetan turban holding a ewer, accompanied by a servant, who distributes beverages. Several men are kneeling nearby, but two are so drunk that they appear to be vomiting.

In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, there is clear description of the festive drinking to celebrate a victory: *btsan po rjes 'bangs dgyes skyems ston mo gsol lo*, «puis le seigneur roi et les sujets firent un joyeux festin à libations», as well as literary descriptions of loyalty oathing and cup rites.[36] The central panel in the Sogdian funerary couch of the Miho Museum (see Figure 8) represents a banquet set within a pavillion. There, a Sogdian man and a Central Asian woman raise cups to each other, seated on a rug, while a dancer, wearing boots and short tunic, performs the 'Sogdian whirl' surrounded by musicians holding lutes, drums and flutes. In the panels of the private collection, the dancer celebrates the oath of loyalty, while in the Guolimo panel, the cup rite seals the betrothal, although no dancer is represented. In the silver ewer conserved in Lhasa, which has been attributed to Tibetan artisans of the 8th to 9th century, the dancer, manifestly Central Asian in appearance with boots, tunic and long wavy hair, is performing the dance of the Sogdian whirl (see Figure 7).[37] On the other side of the Lhasa silver ewer, he is accompanied by two drunken revelers, one of whom is blissfully asleep.[38] The drunken revelers are represented on a sarcophagus of a Central Asian who had emigrated to China.[39] Banquet scenes are very frequent in the wall paintings in Panjikant, both in the reception halls of three or four early 8th century houses, as well as in the temples (Marshak 2001: 232). While some were associated with celebration of Nawruz, the Sogdian New Year, a few days later, the Sogdians celebrated a corollary ritual homage to the deceased. Thus the banquet had both benedictory meaning of images of a happy life in this world and the after-world.[40] The cup ritual, accompanied by a dancer, musicians and Zoroastrian funerary priest are represented as a design motif in a silver bowl attributed to 7th century Iran.[41]

4. Hunting scenes

• Panel II. At lower left, there are two mounted archers who encircle a wild black yak (see Figure 9). Both take aim at the yak. Beneath the yak, three *kyang*, Tibetan antelopes, run as if in fear of pursuit. Perhaps they do not trust the tiger beside them, who extends his full body to devour the neck of a horse. The rider's bow case may

still be seen draped from the saddle, although one does not see a fallen rider near the horse. Beneath this gruesome tiger and his prey, two young horses (or two donkeys (?), the mane is very short) are being chased by two riders, one holding a bow and the other a lance with pennants.

• Guolimo, Panel I. Hunt of two wild black yaks, encircled by two mounted archers behind them and one in front of them. A small dog follows the hunt.

• Guolimo, Panel III. Three reindeer and two yaks are encircled by mounted archers. There is also a hunt of two donkeys by a rider.

The 'royal hunt' and idealized hunting scenes are a very frequent theme of formal portraiture in Sasanian silver and also in Sogdian silver, where the imagery is particularly dynamic. (see Figure 10).[42] Hunting was also a theme of mural paintings in Panjikant.[43] In the sarcophagus of Yu Hong, several panels represent hunting where the kings' mount is an elephant, lion, horse or camel, while in the Sogdian funerary couch of An Qie, the lion hunt by an archer is a theme.[44]

5. Processions

• Panel 1. A procession of foreign envoys on horseback, these riders are guided by two Tibetan men, a rider in front and a rider behind. The high oval brocade hat of the first foreign envoy recalls the hat of the King of Khotan as portrayed in Dunhuang murals of 9th-10th century.[45] The other hats correspond to some distinctive hats systematically represented within the cohort of foreigners depicted in the Dunhuang murals, as well as at Bezeklik (Kageyama 2002: Table 1). To the left of the envoys and their guide, there are two mounted warriors in full armour[46] who are preceded by the two mascots, the small red and white dogs.

• Guolimo, Panel II. A procession of two foreign envoys on horseback, preceded by a Tibetan rider holding a pennant, and followed by a mounted Tibetan archer aiming at a small animal. One envoy has the head totally enshrouded in scarves and a veil in front of the face. The second envoy wears the tall ovoid black hat with back lappet which is worn by the 'foreign' guests (See 2, 'A funerary repast.')

In Panjikant, processions of kings were part of the imagery of the ceremonies for commemoration of the dead, and such processions and banquets were part of the representation of kingly life, deemed to be 'the extreme height of felicity'.[47] The repetition of many scenes with kings where none seems superior to others was a special Sogdian characteristic (Marshak 2001: 232), which seems to be emulated in the procession of foreign envoys in the coffin panels from the private collection and Guolimo.

6. A Caravan

• Panel 2. At center, a heavy-laden camel is preceded by a tall man on horseback and standing attendants. His black robe with red trim seems identical to that of the tall figure seated on the stool to receive homage (See 3, 'Celebration of an oath'). Their faces are similar but the man here wears a low red hat typical of the Tibetan riders in this panel.

• Guolimo, Panel 1. At center, again the camel is represented with bales of goods as well as a saddle on his back. A rider behind and four riders in front, all with quivers visible on their steeds, serve to guard the caravan. This scene has been identified as a commercial caravan by Xu Xinguo (2002, 2005) and Tong and Wertmann (2010). The camel is indeed native to the north-east regions of Tibet in proximity to the Kokonor lake, in riding distance of the Dulan burial grounds.

In the Sogdian funerary couch of An Qie, rather than a commercial caravan, there is a funerary procession with oxen and cart which convey the deceased towards paradise. Perhaps this is the intended meaning of the camels and their burdens in the painted coffin panels?

7. RITUAL ACTIVITIES

Human and animal sacrifice

• Panel 1: Several phases of ritual activity take place near the small round tent at far right.

To the left of this tent, a saddled camel without rider stands beside two standing white goats and a brown goat recumbent on the ground. These animals appear to be destined for sacrifice, in comparison with ancient Tibetan literary descriptions and the archaeological excavation of ancillary tombs containing bones of dog, goat, sheep, horse and yak beside the principal tomb at Dulan.[48] The motif of the saddled, riderless horse in relation to funerary sacrifice in Sogdian art and in the Sogdian funerary couches in China has been amply documented, notably in the Miho funerary couch (Figure 11).[49] Thus, while the camel is not mentioned as a sacrificial animal in Tibetan literary sources, in consideration of its presence amidst the sacrificial goats, it is probable that the saddled riderless camel plays an analogous role as a sacrificial animal in the context of these Tibetan paintings. In proximity to the group of sacrificial animals, there is a mounted archer aiming his arrow at a naked human body, blue smattered with blood, the feet are attached by strings to two poles.[50] It would appear that this scene represents a human sacrifice. While the color of the body is an indication that death has already occured, the blood on the body shows that there was violence prior to death, and the archer shows how he died.[51]

• Panel 2. At center, a large black *brong bu* (wild yak) is tethered to a small pole. Two

zones of red on his back indicate bloody wounds, and two archers stand on fringe rugs above him, their bows and arrows poised to shoot.

• Guolimo, Panel 1. Beside the tent of the 'betrothed couple', an archer wearing a tall Tibetan turban is aiming at the jugular vein of a large white and black tethered yak.

• Guolimo, Panel 2. To the left of the small tent with distinctive large Sogdian roundel fabric cover, three horses, unsaddled, and one bovoid stand as a group. They appear to be destined for sacrifice. At far right, four saddled, riderless horses stand in a line, all adorned with similar Sogdian roundel fabrics as saddle blankets. A tall drum is being played behind them. These horses appear to play the sacrificial role of the 'riderless' horse described above.

The scenes of animal sacrifice are amply demonstrated in the Sogdian and Central Asian funerary couches excavated in China. In mural paintings in the Afrasiab Palace, Samarkand, *aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice) is linked with the celebration of the Sogdian New Year Nawruz.[52] To the best of my knowledge, the scene of human sacrifice is unique to these Tibetan painted coffin panels. In Tibetan historical literature (13th-17th c.) there are accounts of live burial of close servants of the sovereign, but it is Chinese sources (9th-10th c.) which first describe the Tibetan custom of human sacrifice at the tri-annual loyalty oaths, along with animal sacrifice.[53] Xu Xinguo has long maintained that his excavations revealed « incontrovertible evidence of human sacrifice »; however, the only published photographs are those which indicate the practice of animal sacrifice.[54]

Mourning practices

• Panel 1. To the right of the ritual tent, a man dressed in white kneels beside the tent, holding a sword to his face which is smeared with blood. His act is an example of face laceration, to be understood as a funerary practice linked to mourning. Several women approach him and the tent, bringing offerings on trays.

• Guolimo, Panel 2. The ritual tent is encircled by a group of women who stand solemnly; two kneel toward an empty throne at the entrance of the tent. To the left of the tent, a man bends his body, holding the blade of his sword. Paint loss has obscured his face. In view of the face laceration observed in the coffin panel of the private collection, it is presumed that here too this man has lacerated his face.

The practice of face laceration is documented on Sogdian ossuaries and on the Miho couch, at the moment of the *sag-did* funerary ceremony (see Figure 4). In a Buddhist context, face laceration by mourners at the Buddha's passing are painted in mural paintings in Kizil and face laceration and application of red color to the face as a mourning custom is found in Dunhuang, Cave 158, painted during the Tibetan occupation, where the large-scale portrait of the Tibetan *btsan po* leads the group of

mourners of many nationalities and ethnic groups.[55] In the *Old Tibetan Annals*, for the years 678-9, and 712, there is description of perforation of the body of the *btsan po* after death, understood to be a piercing to penetrate the corpse with substances such as salt for embalming purposes. In the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, there is a similar passage prescribing the customs to observe after the death of the *btsan po* and the consort, notably to rub the face with vermilion and to pierce the corpse. Recent scholarship has suggested that rather than pierce the body of the *btsan po*, it is the body of the mourners which is pierced, similar to what is observed in the Miho couch and Kizil.[56] The red color on the faces of many people in these painted panels may well represent this mourning custom, yet it is also a Tibetan cosmetic protection of the skin, still practiced by nomads.[57]

III. Identification of the narrative and the coffins

Do the scenes on the Tibetan painted coffin panels represent the narrative of the life of an individual person? This hypothesis seems unlikely in view of the fact that the Guolimu coffins and the coffin in the private collection studied here repeat some of the same narrative scenes, albeit in different order, as well as finding several parallel narrative scenes in the Sogdian funerary couches.[58] This leads to the suggestion of a generic narrative, rather than the actual events of an individual's life.

In my preliminary study of these coffin panels, I proposed a reading from left to right of the panel, as if the scenes constituted a linear narrative of events in chronological order of occurence during the life of the deceased. However, already in the course of the preliminary analysis, due to the repetition of certain scenes in the Guolimo panels and those of the private collection, albeit in different order, I proposed to suggest instead a generic narrative, rather than actual events of an individual's life. In their comparative studies of several Sogdian funerary couches in China, Annette Juliano and Judith Lerner have proposed the hypothesis of templates which can be reordered to suit the wishes of the family of the deceased (Juliano and Lerner, 1997; 2001). R.A. Stein (1971: 480) indicated this same paradigm of non-sequential order of events in the narrative of the ancient Tibetan ritual texts, « on constate que l'ordre des séquences n'est pas toujours ou nécessairement fixe et intangible ».[59] In a personal communication in 1980, R.A. Stein suggested the parallel of re-arranging the order of activities in a ritual in a manner similar to re-ordering events in a narrative, according to structuralist analysis of narrative as per the seminal writings of Roland Barthes in his essay *S/Z* (Barthes 1970). This suggestion seems very pertinent here in helping us understand what is represented. Who is represented is yet another question remaining to be solved.

At present, the historical circumstances of the conquest of the 'A zha/Tuyuhun and Tibetan sovereignty are clear, as well as are the matrimonial alliances of the 'A zha with the royalty of Central Tibet which led the 'A zha to adopt many Tibetan customs. Are the people represented 'A zha, or Tibetans, or both? Many of the people

wear garments seen as ancient Tibetan costume; this identification is based on murals which portray Tibetans in Dunhuang and isolated rock carvings and early temples, principally in eastern Tibet. We can identify some of the Tibetan people in the coffin paintings, but clear understanding of the many different costumes and hats represented in these coffin paintings remains elusive, as does the precise identification of those who commissioned the paintings on these coffin panels. To what degree is this genre of funerary narrative representation influenced by the customs of the Sogdian emigrant community in Dunhuang, or those settled further east in Liang zhou/Wuwei and others in the Ordos, thus immediately north of the ’A zha territory subjugated by Tibet? Tibetans also settled far northeast of Kokonor during the mid-8th to early 10th centuries in the region of the upper loops of the Yellow River (Huang he) stretching to the Ordos mountains (Beckwith 1987b: 3-5). This was also a region where Tibetans encountered several commercially active, mixed communities of Sogdians and Sogdian-Turkic emigrants who had settled there in the 7th and 8th centuries.[60] Due to both conquest and trade, Tibetans settled in these regions from the late 7th century and remained there even after the collapse of the Tibetan empire in mid-9th century. Direct Tibetan contact with Sogdians must have occured to the west, beyond the passes of the upper Indus which they disputed with the Chinese in the first half of the 8th century, for Tibetan conquests in the Pamirs and Tocharistan brought them to the southern border of Sogdiana until the early 9th century.[61] During the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang, Khotan and the Western garrisons as of the second half of the 8th century to mid-9th century, many Sogdians in Dunhuang had ceased playing the role of great merchants to and from Sogdiana due to the Arab occupation of their homeland. Formerly, they had maintained their Zoroastrian cults and accumulated vast wealth by commercial activity as artisans and merchants; just east of the ramparts of Dunhuang they had constructed a great temple replete with mural paintings as well as paintings on paper and divine statues. These were used in processions for Sogdian ceremonies.[62] The Sogdian funerary couches excavated further east amply document the wealth and status of these Sogdian *sabao*, who for generations had served as ambassadors, as administrative heads of the community, and as religious authorities. But during the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang, strong Buddhist influence encouraged their conversion; some even became actively involved in the Tibetan administration of Dunhuang, and one became the head of the Buddhist clergy, which indicates a high degree of assimilation.[63] Among excavated artefacts of the Dulan tombs, there is a Buddhist reliquary in gilt silver which has been recognized as Sogdian workmanship due to Sogdian design motifs and techniques of metalwork, as well as many other secular gold and silver artefacts.[64] Sogdian silks with gold threads and roundel designs, and their exquisite work of their craftsmen in silver and gold, fascinated the aristocracy of the Tang and Tibetan Empires. Sogdian artisans were extremely popular.[65] The shape of ceremonial ewers on the painted coffin panels appears similar to imported Sogdian vessels or local products emulating Sogdian design.

In these coffin paintings, the adaptation of Sogdian funerary themes is patent, complemented by the representation of garment and tent fabrics and ritual vessels which reflect Sogdian aesthetics. We do not yet know the place of manufacture. Highly portable, such artefacts in metal, and painted wooden coffins, could have been manufactured in towns or by workers of itinerant ateliers of craftsman following the movement of the encampments of the Tibetans throughout their territories. These coffin panels were made during the apogee of the Tibetan Empire, in the context of a syncretic cultural milieu for use in an eclectic religious context prior to the firm assimilation of Buddhism by the Tibetans. The narrative themes and decorative motifs of these painted panels afford us a glimpse of daily life with a spirit of joie-de-vivre, as well as inklings of the aspirations of the afterlife as conceived of by the multi-cultural milieu of the Tibetan Empire in Central Asia.

Conclusions

Three scenes—the facial laceration and the cup ritual and the dancer and musicians of the Sogdian jig—correspond to scenes/visual templates used on Sogdian funerary couches and a Chinese sarcophagus. The degree to which the Tibetans were aware of these antecedents remains to be determined. The vast population of Sogdian merchants in Tang China and the Silk Route oasis occupied by the Tibetans implies cultural as well as commercial exchange. The burial of Sogdian metalware in the Qinghai tombs indicates that Sogdian artisans were renowned and appreciated by the Tibetans.

The reading of the painted panels remains to be determined. It is not certain that the narrative scenes follow a distinct order; as templates, they may be re-arranged to suit the desires of the person who commissioned the paintings or even just to fit the dimensions of the coffin panels.

Are these scenes of the life of the deceased or are they scenes of an "imaginary" glorified life? If the painters are using images which are templates, selecting certain images and discarding others, it is possible that we are only examining a few "episodes" of the narration and or the funerary rituals

These painted panels yield concrete documentation of the mobile habitat of the Tibetans and their neighbours during the sPu rgyal dynasty. The study of the women and men portrayed on these panels—their activities, weapons, cooking utensils and drinking vessels, costumes, jewelry and face make-up, and the accoutrements of their habitats—yield clues to better understanding of daily life in ancient Tibet while simultaneously relating to nomad customs and ritual observances still practiced to the present day. It remains to be determined whether or not additional literary parallels may be discovered in ancient Tibetan historical texts or funerary rituals, or Bonpo funerary rituals, and whether further archaeological investigations will confirm the data of these painted panels.

Notes

1 The primary archeological sources on these Tibetan tombs are studies by Huo Wei, Professor at Center for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University, and Xu Xinguo, Director Qinghai Cultural relics and Archaeological Institute (see bibliography). The most recent archaeological study of the ’Phyong rgyas tombs is Wang Rengxiang, Zhao Huimin, Liu Jianguo, and Guo You’an, “Survey and Study of the Tubo Mausoleums at Chong-gye, Tibet,” *Kaogu Xuebao*, 4 (2002): 471-92. For archaeological investigations of Tibetan tombs in general, in Tibetan, Chinese and western language sources, see Anne Chayet, *Art et Archéologie du Tibet* 1994: 230-8; Paola Mortari Vergara Caffarelli, “Architectural Style in Tombs from the Period of the Kings,” 1997: 230-41; Anne Chayet, “Tradition et archéologie, notes sur les sépultures tibétaines,” 1997: 131-9. On Lha rtse Khrom chen tombs, Pa Tshab Pa sangs dBang ’dus, *Gsar du rnyed pa’i khrom chen bang so’i tshogs la dpyad pa*, 1994: 629-39.

2 Dulan has been identified as the former capital of the ’A zha kingdom according to recent research by local scholars Zhu Shikui and Cheng Qijun (translated by Keith Dede), “A New Investigation of the Geographic Position of the Bailan Capital of the Tuyuhun”, *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 2010.

3 The upper mound is unique to Tibetan tombs of the sPu rgyal period. It is not found in contemporary tombs in central China or in Xinjiang. In the principal tomb at Dulan, the upper mound was excavated and understood to be a sanctuary, the lower mound was the actual tomb, which had been plundered in the past but still contained silks, horse, sheep and yak bones, and fragments of wood (Xu Xinguo 2006: 270). In ’Phyong rgyas, initial investigations in 2012 by the team of Prof. Huo Wei, Sichuan University Center for Tibetan Studies, revealed six tombs with remnants of an upper mound; in Lha rtse there were also several tombs with upper mounds (personal information from Dr. Lu Hongliang). For reconstitution of the superstructure of the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po see E. Haarh, *Yarluṅ Dynasty* 1969: 390-391, plates VI and VII.

4 In central Tibet, such trenches were also found in front of tombs at ’Dus byung (Jidui). See Huo Wei, *Xizang gudai Muzang zhidu yanjiu*, (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 1995: 116, diagram 4-14 and Caffarelli, *op. cit.,* 2007: 235, fig. 271. For sLeb ri (Lieshan), see Huo Wei 2009: 48-49. Complete archaeological excavation and investigation of the royal tombs at’Phyong rgyas is still pending. However, aerial photography indicates the existence of such trenches for animal burial in proximity to the royal tombs. (See Guntram Hazod in this volume.) Six tombs with trenches for horse sacrifice have been excavated in Lha rtse khrom chen, on which see Huo Wei, 1995: 114, diagram 4-12. In Dulan, the 5 rows of trenches (165 meters long) contained remains of 87 horses buried alive; on this see A. Heller, “Some Preliminary Remarks on the Excavations at Dulan”, *Orientations*1998.

5 Pa Tshab 1994: 631, indicates that lion statues were positioned on east and west corners of the main Khrom chen tomb M1. Jampa Panglung illustrates the lions at the east and west corners of ’Phyong rgyas tomb no. 6 in “Die metrischen Berichte über die Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige”, *Tibetan Studies* 1988: 365. On the Dulan lions, see Tang Hui sheng, “Lueshuo Qinghai Dulan Chutu De Tubo Shishi,”*Kaogu*, 2003/12: 82-8. For comparison of these lion statues, see A. Heller, “Lions and Elephants in Tibet, Eighth to Ninth Centuries”, *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology*, 2007.

6 In the opinion of Tong Tao and P. Wertmann 2010: 190, “It is highly probable that the mausoleum complex with a tapered trapezoid shape mound, stone lions and square wall as perimeter was introduced to the Tubo region [from Tang China] and then adapted to local funeral practices.” The present writer disagrees due to the variety of shapes of Tibetan tombs and the upper mound remnants of many Tibetan tombs throughout Tibet. The Tang Annals already noted the presence of the upper mounds as distinctive (Xu Xinguo 1995). Also, while there are

alleys of monumental sculptures of lions, horses and other animals near Tang royal tombs, the Tang stone tomb lions stand on four legs, the mouth grinning and the mane sculpted in long wavy locks, while the Tibetan lions systematically crouch on the hindlegs, the mouth is closed or barely open, the mane is carved in tight curls close to the head. Rather than groups of statues, in Tibet, when found, there are only two stone lion sculptures. Lastly, the square perimeter of the necropolis is a common feature of Tang and Tibetan tombs. However, it is not ubiquitous in Tibetan burial grounds.

7 In the sLeb ri tombs, wooden fragments have been recovered from tomb M 155, the largest of which bears a partially effaced inscription of Tibetan letters: *bla'i cu*. The size of this largest fragment—ca. 100 cm long—tends to suggest that it was a lateral panel of a coffin. Radiocarbon analysis and dendrochronology give results of 7th-8th centuries (C 14: 725 AD; DC: 682-888 AD) (Zhao Huimin 2001.5: 52-54). I thank Shawo Khacham for this reference.

8 Four sites in western Tibet and Mustang have yielded wood fragments or coffin panels, some with traces of red and black pigment: Samdzong in Mustang, Chu rta and Mkhar po near Tholing, Mkhar gdung near Khyung lung dngul mkhar, all discussed during the "International Conference on the Prehistory of the Tibetan Plateau", Center for Tibetan Studies, Sichuan University, 21-24 August 2011. I thank Dr. Lu Hongliang, convenor, for discussion of these findings with me prior to publication of the proceedings.

9 These fragments of wood coffins are now conserved in the Sunan County Museum, Gansu. The circumstances of their excavation in 1979 were very briefly published in a provincial journal, describing the panels and 5 artifacts in gold (a belt buckle, a plaque, two urns). The size (57 x 20 cm and 87 x 24.5 cm) and rectangular format of the two pairs of animals indicate that these were formerly lateral panels of a coffin. The third panel appears to be the end of the same coffin (66x 70 cm), with a painted doorway with two helmet-clad guardians dressed in tiger skin, and a large bird hovering above the doorway. See *Gansu Wenwu Jinghua* (A Selection of Highly Significant Gansu Cultural Relics), edited by Wenwu Publishing, 2006: 188-189. I thank Shawo Khacham for drawing my attention to these artefacts, and Dr. Lu Hongliang for the reference to the Gansu Cultural Relics volume.

10 Xu Xinguo's remarks are quoted by Bruce Doar, "New Discoveries in Qinghai, China", *Heritage Newsletter*, no. 1, March 2005. Doar was responsible for the editing and translation of several of Xu Xinguo's articles in *China Art and Archaeology Digest* 1996.1 and 1996. 2. Although other archaeologists dismissed Xu's hypothesis, firm identification of the inhabitants has not yet been established a decade after the initial excavation in 2002.

11 Xu Xinguo, *ibid*.

12 See Wang Tao, "Tibetan or Tuyuhun, the Dulan Site Revisited" (2009, publication pending). I thank Patrick Wertmann for the information that Cheng Qijun (Qinghai Archaeological Institute) interprets the depicted people to be Tuyuhun on the basis of their clothes, in particular their hats, as well as the representations of hunting, trading, ritual ceremonies and sexual intercourse. Luo Shiping (Beijing) identified the people as Tibetan according to the scenes of self-mutilation (as described by the Jiu Tang shu and the Xin Tang Shu), official visits, yak hunt and banquets. The third theory is given by Lin Meicun (Beijing University). Lin claims the depicted people to be Supi (苏毗), for instance, because of a tree pattern featured in two scenes, which Lin identifies as sacred tree or tree of life which was worshipped by the Supi(letter of 25.02.2011). It is important to note that, according to Wang Yao and Chen Jian (1983: 162), Dunhuang Tibetan document PT 1283 records that the language of the Khitan and that of the Tuyuhun were mutually intelligible. Thus, as both were of Mongolic ethnic stock, they could generally communicate with each other.

13 An initial comparison of themes represented on these panels in relation to ancient and modern ritual practices formed the basis of my preliminary study presented in Vancouver, 2010, at the

Twelfth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. See A. Heller *in press* for discussion of these coffin panels, now conserved in private collections and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

14 A. Heller, "The Silver Jug of the Lhasa Jokhang: Some Observations on Silver Objects and Costumes from the Tibetan Empire (7th-9th Century)", *www.asianart.com/articles* 2002; subsequent print publication: *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 2003.

15 P. Riboud, "Le Cheval sans Cavalier dans l'art funéraire sogdien en Chine: à la recherche de sources d'un thème composite", *Arts Asiatiques* 2003; A. Juliano and J. Lerner, "Cultural Crossroads : Central Asian and Chinese Entertainers on the Miho Funerary Couch", *Orientations* 1997.

16 I thank Dr Zhang Changhong for discussion on the Tibetan and Chinese calendar cycles.

17 P.O. Harper, "The Senmurv", *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Ar*t 1961: 96. In this end panel, the lion face with horns evokes the divine Indian hybrid creature, the *kirtimukha*, but *kirtimukha* usually do not have apparent wings. In Panjikent, in the masonry of a 6th century city wall, there was found a silver gilt medallion 4 cm in diameter chased in high relief depicting a *kirtimukha*, presumably an emblem detached from a silver bowl, as well as similar terracotta figures from the 6th-8th century (see B. Marshak *Soghdian Silver* 1971: 144 and fig. 33)

18 Typically on Sasanian silver of the seventh to eighth century, this griffin creature will have front paws, a mammal's head and neck, then wings. Rather than hind legs, the latter half of the body terminates in a bird tail. See Harper, *ibid*., Fig. 1, and discussion in B. Marshak *op.cit.* 1971: 119-120, Fig T 17 (OS 49).

19 Xu Xinguo/B. Doar 2005; See Edward H. Schafer, *The Vermilion Bird*, for a detailed study of this bird and its mythology.

20 Xu Xinguo /B. Doar 2005.

21 In the Qinghai Archaeological Institute in 1997, I saw the body of a tall mummified male (height ca. 185 cm dessicated, probable height during life, ca. 192 cm) recovered from a tomb. Unfortunately, its state of preservation deteriorated and it was subsequently discarded (personal information from Xu Xinguo).Although no skeleton was excavated from the main tomb at Dulan, mitochondrial DNA analysis of human bones in the second largest tombs at Dulan (99 DRNM 2, 99 DRNM 4) correspond to the DNA of modern Tibetans (Dulan 2005: 158-162; 170)

22 The shape of their high hats recalls those worn by a priest performing the Zoroastrian funerary fire ritual as represented on the stone funerary couch of the Miho Museum, on which see J. Lerner, "Central Asians in Sixth Century China: a Zoroastrian Funerary Rite" (1995). A strikingly similar hat is worn by two people portrayed on a coffin cloth decoration excavated in Ningxia, attributed to late 5th century Sogdian emigrants (M. Pirazzoli t'Serstevens, "Pour une archéologie des échanges: apports étrangers en Chine transmission, réception, assimilation" *Arts Asiatiques* 1994: fig. 8). On the Guolimo panel II, in the group of four foreign envoys on horseback, one man is wearing a very similar high black ovoid hat. In the lower right corner of Guolimo Panel II, opposite the horses for funerary sacrifice, two men wearing similar high ovoid black hats are seated. In Tong Tao's sketch, they face the horses for sacrifice, in Luo Shiping's sketch, they face in the opposite direction towards the ritual tent.

23 A. Juliano and J. Lerner, "The Miho Couch Revisited in the Light of Recent Discoveries", *Orientations* 2001: 58

24 The sketches of the first two panels are those of Luo Shiping 2006: 69, the third panel sketch is by Tong Tao, Tong and Wertmann 2010: 196. The painting on the fourth panel has much paint loss, the narration is thus quite fragmentary. A modern artist's rendition of the Guolimo panels was published in *Chinese National Geographic* (2006).

25 To date, no radio-carbon analysis of wood, bone or grain, nor dendro-chronology of the wood has been published in relation to the Guolimo tomb excavations.

26 In Tong Tao's sketch of Guolimo Panel II, at far left, there is an amorous couple (only heads visible), their bodies concealed by the mound of the hill. This couple is not indicated on Luo Shiping's sketch of Panel II.

27 Personal correspondence with Boris Marshak, 17 April 2005.

28 Similar garments with contrasting roundel fabric are documented in the portrait of the Tibetan btsan po and his entourage in Dunhuang Cave 159 studied by H. Karmay, "Tibetan Costumes, 7th to 11th centuries", *Essais sur l'Art du Tibet* 1977. Many Sogdian silks with roundel designs were excavated in Dulan by Xu Xinguo. They are now conserved in the Qinghai Archaeological Institute (Xu Xinguo 2006). Large scale roundel pattern silks with confronted lions bearing a Tibetan inscription describing burial as treasure of a tomb are now conserved in the Abegg Foundation, Switzerland (see A. Heller, "Two Inscribed Fabrics and their Historical Context: Some Observations on Esthetics and Silk Trade in Tibet, 7th to 9th Century", *Riggisberger Berichte* 1998).

29 This hat has been identified by E. Kageyama among the repertory of the typology of hats depicting foreigners developed in Dunhuang during the mid-Tang dynasty (705-847), which coincides with the Tibetan occupation of Dunhuang in the late eighth to mid-ninth century. See E. Kageyama, "A Chinese way of Depicting Foreign Delegates", *Iran Questions et Connaissances* 2002: Table 1. Tong and Wertman (2010: 209, fig. 30-31) illustrate this hat, which they identify as worn by a Tibetan person, noting that it is very similar to the early Xianbei costume found on murals and coffin paintings from Datong, prior to sumptuary rules requiring the sinicization of Xianbei attire (see Huo Wei 2007: 61). As the 'A zha/Tuyuhun ethnic group has been identified as descendents of the Murong Xianbei, who migrated from Datong region towards the Kokonor region, it is quite possible that this represents an 'A zha hat.

30 A. Juliano and J. Lerner, 2001: 56.

31 J. Lerner, *op. cit*. 1995 and J. Lerner, "Zoroastrian Funerary Beliefs and Practices Known from the Sino-Sogdian Tombs in China", *The Silk Road* 2011.

32 M. Lalou, "Rituel Bon-po des Funérailles royales", *Journal Asiatique* 1952.

33 E. Kageyama has identified the vignette of presenting offerings of victuals to a "lord" seated on an hour-glass stool on two funerary couches of Central Asians excavated in China, where she attributed the imagery to be of Sogdian origin, while Chinese archaeologists had initially identified it as a Xianbei motif. See E. Kageyama, "Quelques remarques sur des monuments funéraires de Sogdiens en Chine", *Studia Iranica* 2005: 264, fig. 4b, 4c.

34 The 'Sogdian whirl', in Chinese *hu xuan tu*, was a very popular dance in Tang China and throughout the Silk Route, where it was often represented in 'paradise of Amitabha' or 'paradise of Bhaiṣayjaguru' scenes in Dunhuang and Yulin, such as Yulin cave 25 and Dunhuang cave 112, both painted during the Tibetan occupation (Heller 2002: fig. 24, Cave 112 dancer). I thank Judith Lerner for much discussion on this dance and its representation on Sogdian and Central Asian funerary couches sculpted in 6th-7th century China. See A. Juliano and J. Lerner *op.cit.*1997 and A. Juliano and J. Lerner *op.cit.* 2001. B. Marshak discussed representations of many musicians and dancers in Room 1, Section VI of Panjikent (B. Marshak *op.cit*. 2001: 234.)

35 On cup rites of betrothal as represented in funerary reliefs, see E. Esin "And : The Cup Rites in Inner-Asian and Turkish Art", 1969: 228-229, for discussion of a panel in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Esin also illustrates a drawing in red wash from the Astana cemetary of Turfan, 6th to 7th century, now conserved in National Museum of Delhi (Ast. VI-3-05) which shows the vassal presenting the cup to the ruler in a gesture of homage and loyalty such as seen on the panels in the private collection studied here (1969: 228, figure 1B).

36 M. Walter, *Buddhism and Empire,* 2009: 174-186. The taking of oath is specified in an early description of the tomb of the first historic *btsan po* in the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* (12th c.): *bang so smug po ri ni / lha khang 5 yod pa brtsigs te/ dar zab kyis brgyan nas/ bang so la mna' gsol chen po byas par mthong ngo//*. Within the tomb sMug po ri, there were 5 chapels constructed and decorated with silk brocade; at the tomb the enactment of the great oath was seen (vol.1: 592).

37 See A. Heller *op.cit*. 2002/2003 for a discussion of the various chronologies proposed for this ewer, and the manifestly Sogdian design motifs and techniques of manufacture (foil gilt cladding). If this ewer had been made by a Sogdian artisan, probably the crown worn by the dancer would reflect a realistic model based on coins then in circulation; instead, the crown is a distortion of the royal crown. This leads to the attribution of the workmanship to a non-Sogdian artisan, probably a Tibetan artisan emulating Sogdian techniques and design. Esin *op. cit.* 1969: fig 10 A illustrates a sketch of a mural painting in the Uygur palace of Idikut at Gaochang showing two large ewers, one with phoenix head and one with deer head very similar to the Lhasa ewer, drawn by Grünwedel in 1907 (see Grünwedel 1912).

38 See U. von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*, 2001, and A. Heller *op.cit.* 2002 and 2003. I thank Ulrich von Schroeder for kind permission to publish his photograph.

39 See B. Marshak, "The Sarcophagus of Sabao Yu Hong, a Head of the Foreign Merchants (592-598)", *Orientations,* 2004. In March 2011, thanks to Professor Huo Wei, I was privileged to see photographs of a fourth coffin panel, now in a private collection, on which the dancer of the Sogdian whirl and the revelers are represented.

40 M. Compareti, *Samarcanda centro del mondo. Proposte di lettura del ciclo pittorico di Afrasyab*, 2010.

41 This bowl is illustrated by three photographs in A. Heller o*p.cit*, 2002: figure 8. It is conserved in the Smithsonian Institute Arthur M. Sackler Gallery S1987.105. The priest wearing the specific mouth-cover of the fire ritual is illustrated in the Sackler collections: http://www.asia.si.edu/exhibitions/online/luxuryarts/4b.htm.

42 For the imagery of Sasanian silver, see P.O. Harper, *The Royal Hunter* (1978), and for Sogdian silver, see B. Marshak, *Soghdian Silver* (1971) and *Silberschätze des Orients* (1986). I am greatly indebted to Boris Marshak for authorization to reproduce his drawings (letter of June 7, 2002). For an example of Sogdian hunting design on silver plate, see 1971: T30.

43 B. Marshak, "A Hunting scene from Panjikant", *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 1992.

44 B. Marshak *op.cit.* 2004; Rong Xinjiang et al, *From Samarkand to Chang' an: CulturalTraces of the Sogdians in China,* 2004.

45 The King of Khotan is portrayed on the northern wall of the passageway of Dunhuang Cave 220, 925 AD. See Ning Chang, "Diplomatic Icons: Social and Political Meanings of Khotanese images in Dunhuang Cave 220", *Oriental Art* 1998/9.

46 The Tang Annals document a suit of golden armor as tribute from Tibet in 634 AD. See similar armor on warriors in Dunhuang cave 420 (attributed to Sui dynasty 581-618), illustrated in Yang Hong, *Weapons in Ancient China*, 1992: color fig. 38. I thank Donald LaRocca, curator of Arms and Armor, Metropolitan Museum of Art, for this reference. In the Dulan tomb M3, small wooden equestrians wearing similar full head and body armor were excavated, see Dulan 2005: 98-99, figs. 61-63.

47 B. Marshak op.cit. 2002: 21.

48 In the abundant literature on animal sacrifice during Tibetan funerary rites, see in particular, M. Lalou, *op.cit.* 1952, and and R.A. Stein, "Du Récit au Rituel dans les Documents de Touen-Houang", *Etudes tibétaines dédiées à la mémoire de Marcelle Lalou* (1971); for archaeologists' reports see Xu Xinguo, *op.cit*. 1996, 2005, and 2006.

49 For the riderless horse, see P. Riboud *op.cit*. B. Marshak discusses the role of the horse as funerary animal in relation to the horse as the mount of Mithra, god and judge of the dead in

Sogdiana, represented on a Sogdian funerary couch made in China. See B. Marshak *op.cit.,* 2004: 64. H. Inagaki states that "traditonal motifs since Han period show departure to the afterlife, horse or cart without rider, gate to the world of the afterlife, paradise banquet". (H. Inagaki, "Reconsideration of stone funerary couches/ coffin chambers, Northern Dynasties", *Bulletin of the Miho Museum*, 2009: 123).

50 In Panjikent VI.8, north wall, a naked male blue figure was represented, the color of his body was analyzed as symbolic and indicative of his supernatural status. See Guitty Azarpay, *Sogdian Painting* 1981: 165.

51 See A. Heller *in press* for contemporary ritual parallels observed in Ladakh and Amdo. Tong Tao *op. cit.* 2008: 6.5 1-13 illustrated fragments of a painted coffin conserved in a private collection which also indicated human sacrifice. A mounted archer aims at a standing emaciated body (pale color) attached by strings to poles. Rather than a human sacrifice, Tong considered that this represented "shooting an evil spirit" (2008: 163).

52 M. Compareti *op.cit.* 2010: 151.

53 See E. Haarh, *op. cit*. 1969: 334-341 for discussion of Tibetan sources and the Tang Annals; 345 for the quotation from several Chinese sources, the earliest of which dates from 801 AD, describing human sacrifice at the time of the funeral of the Tibetan emperor *btsan po.* The Dunhuang document PT 1042 studied by M. Lalou (*op.cit.*1952), which describes the royal funeral rituals, has philological evidence which situates it much later than the Tibetan empire (M. Walter, *op.cit.* 2009: 192-194).

54 Xu Xinguo, "An investigation of Tubo (Tibetan) sacrificial burial practices", *China Art and Archaeology Digest* 1996.

55 I thank Judith Lerner for kindly providing the photograph of an ossuary painted with scenes of face laceration and the reference for Kizil, cave 224, where people cut their hair as well as their faces. Huo Wei (*op. cit.* 2008) has discussed the Dunhuang mural of Cave 158 in relation to the study of the Guolimo coffin panels, due to the red color applied to many faces as a mourning custom in the coffin paintings.

56 See B. Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals* 2009: 72, 85, with reference to PT 1042 ll. 100, 109, for the expression *btol chen po*, "great piercing or perforation", translated by M. Lalou as "grand enterrement" (*op. cit*. 1952: 357). See N.W. Hill, "The Old Tibetan Chronicle, Chapter 1", *Revue des Etudes tibétaines* 2006: 95-96, and E. Haarh, *op.cit.* 1969: 344. Sam van Schaik ("What happens between death and the tomb?", posted on October 27,2008, on earlytibet.com.) proposed the re-interpretation of the passage on piercing refer to the mourners rather than the body of the emperor. I thank Nathan Hill for discussion of this passage; he is now convinced by S. van Schaik's interpretation that it is the body of the mourners and not the emperor which is pierced. (Personal communication of March 9, 2012.)

57 I thank Bianca Horleman for sending me Chinese references of the Tang period on this Tibetan custom. For discussion of the modern custom to protect the skin by application of dried whey, see Heller *in press.*

58 E. Kageyama (*op.cit*. 2005) maintained the hypothesis that the scenes on the Sogdian funerary couches represented a genuine life-story of the deceased, similar to Xu Xinguo (*op. cit.* 2005), who affirmed that the Guolimo panels represented the life-story of the *btsan po*.

59 This paradigm of non-sequential order has also been noticed by Marshak, "L'ordonnancement des plaques s'est dans certains cas écarté de la logique", in B. Marshak *op.cit.* 2001: 234.

60 E. de La Vaissière and E. Trombert, "Des Chinois et des Hu migrations et intégration des Iraniens orientaux en milieu chinois durant le haut Moyen Age", *Annales Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 2004: 943. In Chengdu, there was also an important Sogdian community renowned for its weavings of silk medallion fabrics; see A. Heller *op. cit*. 1998: 112-114.

61 C. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* 1987: 108, cited by E. de La Vaissière, *Histoire des Marchands Sogdiens* 2004: 153.

62 F. Grenet and Zhang Guangda, "The Last Refuge of the Sogdian Religion: Dunhuang in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries", *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 1996: 175, 181.

63 E. de La Vaissière et E. Trombert, *op.cit.* 2004: 967. The conversion to Buddhism by Sogdians in Dunhuang was perhaps a consequence of the An Lushan rebellion in 755 which, due to his mixed Sogdian-Turkic origin, had been followed by a wave of persecution of Sogdians and Central Asians in China.

64 A. Heller, "Archaeology of Funeral Rituals as Revealed by Tibetan Tombs of the 8th to 9th Century" *Ērān ud Anērān* 2006.

65 E. de La Vaissière and E. Trombert 2004: 940, "L'aristocratie chinoise est en effet, au VIIe et dans la première moitié du VIIIe siècle, entichée de modes Hu (i.e., mixed ethnic of Sogdian-Turkic): tenues, musiques, danses, jeux viennent souvent d'Occident." See also Rong Xinjiang, "Khotanese Felt and Sogdian Silver Foreign Gifts to Buddhist monasteries in Dunhuang", *Asia Major* 2004.

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Panel I


Panel II



Fig. 1. End panel with Blue Phoenix and Hybrid Feline,
pigments on wood, 76 x 63 cm.



Fig. 2. End panel with Snake and Hybrid Feline, pigments on wood, 67 x 50 cm.



Fig. 3. A Funerary Repast, panel I (detail), pigments on wood.



Fig. 4. Zoroastrian funerary ritual of Sag-did and face laceration (detail), Funerary couch, marble with traces of pigments and gilding, 60.0 x 41.5 x 5.1 cm., China, late 6th-early 7th c, Shumei Collection, Miho Museum.



Fig. 5. “An oath of Loyalty” celebration with dancer and musicians, Panel II

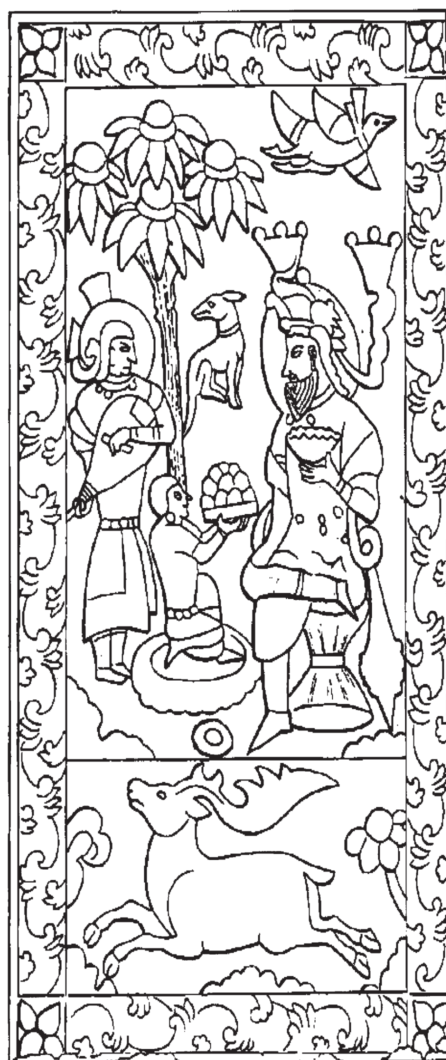


Diagram 7. Offering of Homage to the Lord, Sogdian sarcophagus of Yu Hong, stone with pigments, China ca. 590 AD, *after* Rong Xinjiang 2004.



Fig. 6. A cup oath rite of Betrothal, Guolimo, panel I (detail), pigments on wood, *after* Luo Shiping 2006 *Wenwu*.

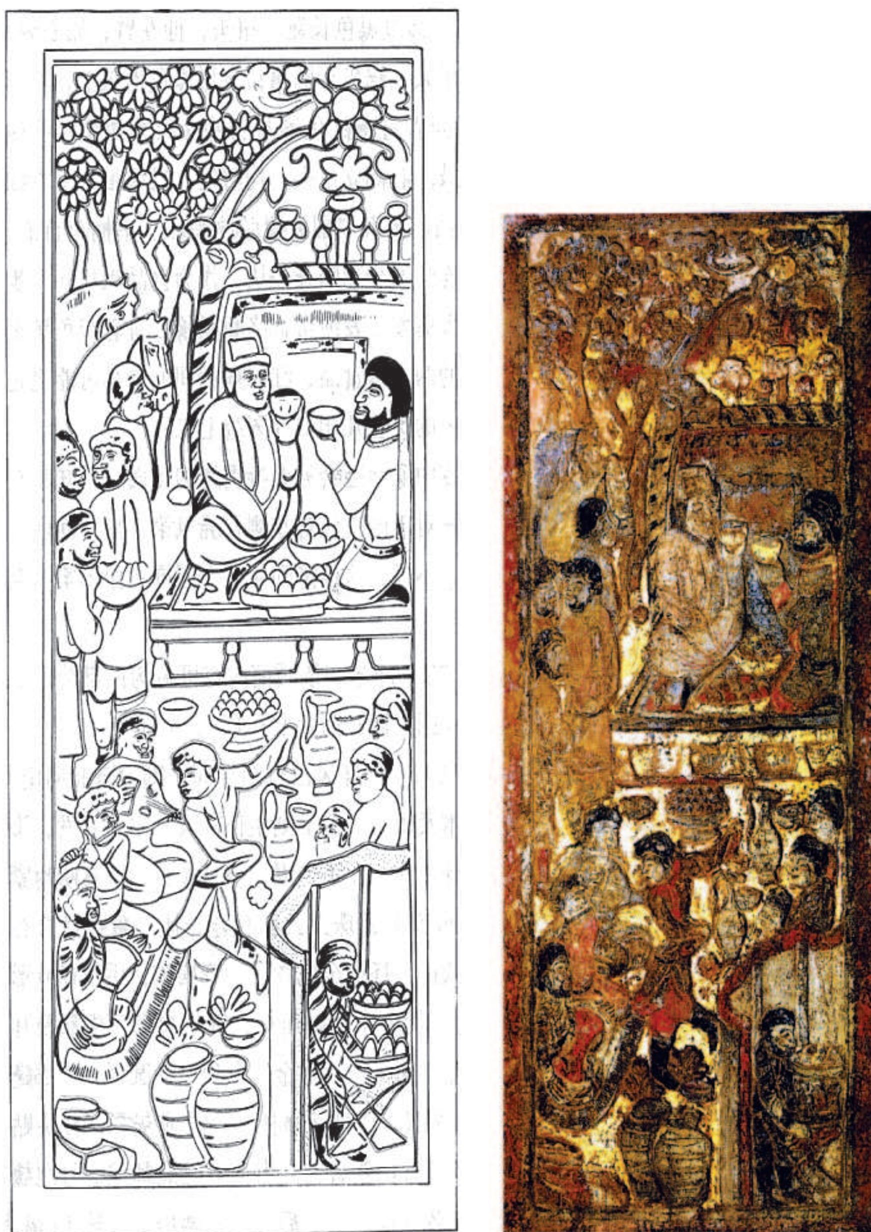


Diagram 6. Celebration of an oath of loyalty, Sogdian funerary couch of An Qie, stone with pigments and gilding, China, 579 AD, *after* Rong Xinjiang 2004.



Fig. 7. Dancer of Sogdian Whirl (detail), ewer, silver with gilding, total height ca 110 cm, Lhasa gTsug lag khang. Photo courtesy of Ulrich von Schroeder.



Fig. 8. Scene of Betrothal and Celebration (detail), Funerary couch, marble with traces of pigments and gilding, 61.5 x 34.6 x 5.7 cm., late 6th-early 7th c, China, Shumei Collection, Miho Museum after museum



Fig 9. The hunt of the yak and attack of the tiger, Panel II (detail), pigments on wood.



Fig. 10. Hunting scene, silver bowl, 26 cm, 8th-9th century, Hermitage Museum (drawing by Boris Marshak, after Sogdhian Silver 1971: T 30, with kind permission of Boris Marshak).



Figure 11. The Riderless Horse (detail), Funerary couch, marble with traces of pigments and gilding, 60.9 x 26.8 x 5.7 cm., China, late 6th-early 7th c, Shumei Collection, Miho Museum.



Figure 12. Arrival of foreign envoys, preparation for sacrifice of riderless camel and goats, ritual of face laceration, panel I (detail), pigments on wood.



Fig. 13. Archer aiming at tethered corpse, panel I (detail), pigments on wood.



Fig. 14. The ritual of face laceration, panel I (detail), pigments on wood.



Fig. 15. Rituals of Mourning the Buddha by the Tibetan *btsan po* and a cohort of delegates, some perform hair cutting and face laceration, Dunhuang cave 158, early 9th century.



Fig. 16. Scene of homage and banquet, Panel II (detail),
pigments on wood.



Fig. 17. Musicians at the banquet and dancer performing the Sogdian Whirl, Panel II (detail), pigments on wood.



The Sogdianwhirl
Represented on the silver jug, Now conserved in the Lhasa gTsug lag khang,
A central Asian dancer performs the dance of the Sogdianwhirl.
photo © Ulrich von Schroeder



Sogdianwhirl

'COME AS LORD OF THE BLACK-HEADED' – an Old Tibetan mythic formula

NATHAN W. HILL

Come as lord (*rjer gśegs*)

In the first chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287) Sha-khyi, one of the two exiled sons of the emperor Dri-gum-bstan-po, sings an enigmatic victory song after killing the relatives of his father's assassin, the horse groom Lo-ngam. Following that song, in the closing word of the chapter, is what would appear out of context to be a summary of the action.[1]

> *sgyed-po 'og gzugs-na / zangs rdo (61) bla-nas phab-ste / rje-ru gshegso //*
> *bshos-na nĭ Spu-de-gung-rgyal / grongs-na nĭ Grang-mo-gnam-bse' / (62) brtsig /*
> *'greng mgo nag-gĭ rje / dud rngog-chags-kyi rkyen-du gshegs'o //*
> When he created the hearth-stone below, copper stones fell from above. He came as the lord.
> In birth, [he was called] Spu-de Gung-rgyal. In death, they erected [the tomb] Grang-mo Gnam-bse'. He came in order to be the lord of black-headed and upright (men) and the owner of maned and bent (animals, esp. yaks).

This apparent summary of events does not conform to the events of the preceding narrative. His name is Sha-khyi and not Spu-de Gung-rgyal. It is his father and not he who has just been entombed. Comparing other attestations of the phrase *rjer gshegs* 'come as lord' sheds some light on this enigmatic passage.

The phrase *rjer gshegso* 'come as lord' is used in Old Tibetan texts to describe the descent from heaven of the first ruler. The Dunhuang text PT 1286, known as the 'Catalog of principalities', mentions the origin of the imperial dynasty in the following words.

> *khri 'i-bdun-tshigs-kyĭ sras / khri Nyag khrĭ btsan po' // (32) sa dog-la yul yab-kyi rje / dog yab-kyi char-du gshegs-s'o //* [...] *thog-ma sa-la gshegs (35)-pa yang / gnam mtha' 'og-gĭ rjer gshegs pas /*
> The son of Khri-'i Bdun-tshĭgs, Khri Nyag-khri Btsan-po', came to the narrow earth as rain to rule the earth and the fathers of the land. [...] At first, he came to the earth, came as the lord of [all] below heaven.

1 All Dunhuang documents cited in this study follow the text of Imaeda et al. (2007).

The story is also found in the 'Prayers of the foundation of the De ga g.yu tshal monastery' (IOL Tib J 0751, circa 823).

(1) 'O-lde-spu-rgyal gnam-gyĭ lha-las myĭ'ĭ rjer gshegs-pa yong
'O-lde-spu-rgyal came from the gods of heaven as ruler of men

The story of the divine descent of the imperial line is also told succinctly in the opening of several imperial inscriptions.

The Rkong-po Inscription (circa 800-815)
thog-ma Phywa Ya bla-dbag-drug-gĭ sras-las/ Nya-grĭ btsan-po myi yul-gyĭ rjer// Lha-rĭ gyang-dor gshegs-pa tshun chad
In the beginning, from the time when Nya-grĭ Btsan-po [who came] from the sons of the Phywa [god] Ya-bla Bdag-drug, went to Lha-ri Ryang-do as the lord of the land of men... (Li and Coblin 1987: 198, 205).
Inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde-srong-brtsan (circa 815)
btsan-po lha sras/ 'O-lde spu-rgyal// gnam-gyĭ lha-las myĭ'i rjer gshegs-pa//
The emperor, son of the gods, 'O-lde Spu-rgyal, came down from the gods of heaven as lord of men (Li and Coblin 1987: 241 and 246).
Fragmentary tablet at Zhwa bavi lha khang
myĭ'i mgon-du sa-la gshegs-nas
come to the earth as lord of men (Li and Coblin 1987: 274).

In the east face of the Sino-Tibetan treaty inscription the first ruler comes not as 'lord' (*rje*) but as 'king' (*rgyal-po*).

(5) 'phrul-gyĭ lha btsan-po 'O-lde spu-rgyal// yul byung sa dod tshun cad (6) gdung ma 'gyur bar// Bod-kyĭ rgyal-po chen-po mdzad-pa yang// (7) « gangs ri mthon po'i ni dbus// chu bo chen po'i ni mgo// yul mtho sa gtsang// » zhes// (8) gnam-gyĭ lha-las// myi'i rgyal-por gshegs te/
From when the sacred god, the emperor, 'O-lde Spu-rgyal, came to this land and emerged [on] this earth, his unchanging lineage served as the great kings of Tibet. Saying, "It is the center of the high snow mountains, the source of the great rivers, the high lands, the pure earth," he came from among the gods of heaven as the king of men (Li and Coblin 1987: 47, 95).

The 14th century *Rgyal-po bka'i thang-yig* edited by O rgyan gling pa has two versions of the story,[2] the first of which is phrased very similarly to that in the first chapter of *Old Tibetan Chronicle*.

Rje gcig Gña' khri btsan-po bya-ba de mgo nag mi-dang srog chags rkyen-du byon

2 There are many other post-dynastic versions of the Gña'-khri-btsan-po myth and an extensive secondary literature treating elements of this tale, which would need to be taken account of in a larger study (e.g. Hazod 1991, Karmay 1994). The *Rgyal-po bka'i thang-yig* is referred to here only as one of many possible instances.

A ruler named Gña’-khri-btsan-po arrived on behalf of black-headed men and animals. (18v qtd. in Haarh 1969: 233).
de dus Bod khams mi-la rje med-pas [...] *Bod-kyi btsan-po ’O-de spur-rgyal de: gnam-gyi lha-las mi yul rje-ru gshegs*
Because at that time the men of Tibet had no ruler, ’O-de spu-rgyal came from among the gods of heaven as the ruler of the land of men (18r qtd. in Haarh 1969: 233-234).

The vocabulary and the grammar of these phrases is stereotyped, a mythic formula. A divine ancestor (either ’O-lde-spu-rgyal or Nya-gri-btsan-po) comes from heaven to earth as the lord of men. The changed name of Sha-khyi at the end of chapter one of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* is Spu-de Gung-rgyal, a name similar to ’O-lde-spu-rgyal. By retaking his father’s castle, and restoring the legitimate line of royal descent, Sha-khyi reenacts the founding of his dynasty by a mythic ancestor who descended from the heavens. This passage identifies Sha-khyi both with his recently interred father Dri-gum btsan-po and with his divine ancestor ’O-lde-spu-rgyal. The only part of the formula which is missing is ‘from heaven to earth’, which is appropriate, since Sha-khyi is not a divine ancestor but rather the son of a usurped king reasserting his tradition rights. He has not come from heaven.

The black-headed

Of the passages quoted so far, it is only in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* and much later *Rgyal-po bka’i thang-yig* that the divine leader comes as the lord of the ‘black-headed’ rather than of ‘men’. The context immediately suggests that ‘black-headed’ is an epithet for ‘men’. A number of passages in Old Tibetan texts corroborate this meaning. In the Dunhuang document PT 0126, ‘The envoy of Phywa to Dmu’, messengers of the Phywa gods are trying to convince the lord of the Dmu gods to, among other things, come to earth as the ruler of men.

(111) Phywa-’is bka’ stsald / «rje ni zhu phud-nas / mgo nag ’greng-la rje myed (112) rje skos-la / rngog chags dud-la khram thob-cig!» ces bka’ stsald-pa /
Phywa decrees: «When you have met (?)[3] a lord, the black-headed and upright (men) have no lord; in addition to appointing a lord (for them) for the maned and bent (animals, esp. yaks), draw up a ledger!»

The narrative of this text is part of the pre-story of divine descent signaled by the phrase *rjer gshegs*. The god must be convinced by messengers that he should descend. One of the three versions of the origin of the imperial dynasty contained in a text called the *Yo ga (yi ge) lha gyes can*, quoted in the *Lde’ chos ’byung*, contains the

3 “王をあえてお願いした後。[When you are able to meet the king and request of him.]” (Ishikawa 2001: 151).

same story, the god being convinced to descend from heaven to rule over men (Karmay 1998[1994]: 299-300). A disembodied voice addressed a council of Tibetan leaders who are worrying about their lack of a leader.

> *bka' Bod 'bangs mgo nag-gi rje 'dod-na/ Rmu yul ngam 'brang lcang 'brang bya-ba-na/ gnam rim-pa bdun-gyi steng / gser mkhar g.yu bad-can-gyi nang-na lha'i gdung rmu'i tsha lha rje Gña'-khri-btsan-po bya-ba bzhugs-kyi mgo nag-gi rjer spyan drongs-shig ! bya-ba'i sgra byung-ngo /*
> If the black-headed Tibetan people wish to have a ruler, on the seventh stage of heaven, the place of Dmu, in a gold castle with a turquoise roof, there is a lord Khri Bar-gyi Bdun-tshigs who is a descendant from the Phywa gods and a cousin of the Rmu gods. Invite him to be your ruler! (Mkhas-pa-lde'u 1987: 233, 2003: 262, translation follows Karmay 1998[1994]: 299).

On the advise of the voice the Tibetans employ the god Skar-ma-yol-lde as a go-between to negotiate with Khri Bar-gyi-bdun-tshigs on their behalf that he descend to be their ruler. In a version of the same story contained in the 14th century *Blon-po bka'i thang yig* edited by O rgyan gling pa, this narrative is more abbreviated. The lord Skar-ma-yol-sde recommends that the Tibetans invite Gña'-khri-bstan-po to be their lord. This recommendation also serves as the opening of Skar-ma-yol-sde's negotiations with Gña'-khri-bstan-po for his descent.

> *«gnam sa rim-pa lnga-yi sdeng* [sic *steng*] *bzhugs-a /*
> *Gña'-khri-btsan-po bya-ba Lha-yi sras /*
> *Dmu-yi dbon-po yod-bas spyan-drongs!» gsungs*
> «He who dwells atop the five part land of heaven,
> the son of the gods called Gña'-khri-btsan-po,
> because he is a nephew of Dmu, invite him!» said [Lord Skar-ma-yol-sde] (7r qtd. in Haarh 1969: 235).

Like the *Yo ga (yi ge) lha gyes* the Dunhuang text PT 1038 relates three version of the origin of the royal clan. The third version given is the by-now familiar descent of the ruler from heaven.

> *(12) rnam gsum-du nĭ gnam rĭm-pa bcu gsum-gyĭ steng-na/ (13) Khrĭ-bar-la-bdun-tshĭg/ shes bgyĭ// gnam gĭ lha las/ sa ga (14) dog drug du// 'greng 'go nag-gĭ rje myed-gĭ rje// dud rngog chag (15) bla myed-kyĭ blar/ blon po lho rngegs/ bon-po mtshe gco/ phyag (16) tshang sha spug// myĭ rje lha-dang bdud/ du brgyĭs-nas// yul bod ka (17) g.yag drug-du byon zhes mchĭ//*
> Concerning the third [theory], there are some who say that one called Khrĭ-bar-la-bdun-tshĭg came from the heavenly gods atop the thirteenth level of heaven with the ministers Lho and Ngegs, the Bon-po Mtshe and Gco, and the 'intendants' (*phyag-tshang*) Sha and Spug to the six [parts of the] narrow earth to serve as lord to the lordless black-headed men and as authority over those maned animals without an authority.

This version most closely resembles the succinct reenactment given in the first chapter of the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. In both passages the lord must deal both with 'black-headed' men and with 'maned' yaks. The epithet 'black-headed' indicates mankind, particularly in its need of divinely descended political leadership, and in contrast to 'maned' yaks.

The contrast between human and divine inherent in the epithet 'black-headed' is brought to the fore in the Bon-po marriage liturgy *Ming sring dpal bgos dang lha 'dogs*, as translated by Karmay.

> "My daughter Srid-lcam will go from the gods to the gods. She is not made for black-headed man. The rising and the setting of the sun and moon takes place in the real of the sky. Have you ever seen them fall down to the plain? We are the gods of the heavens. You are a black-headed earth-word!" (Karmay 1998[1975]: 148).

The fact that the marriage is ultimately permitted shows that although the chasm separating god and man is wide it can be crossed. The cosmogonic text *Dbu mi'u 'dra chags*, where man is given the epithet *dbu nag* 'black-headed' employing *dbu* the honorific term for 'head' instead of *mgo*, goes a step further by intentionally undermining the opposition between god and man.

> *der dbu nag mi zhes-pa 'di/ dang-po byung-ba'i phug btsun-ste/ 'od gsal lha'i gdung la(s) grol/*
>
> First, the one called little black-headed man, (2a) is of good origin since he was produced by the race of luminous gods. (Karmay 1998[1986]: 261).

Both the use of *dbu* instead of *mgo*, and the claim that not only royalty, but mankind as a whole descends from the gods serve to undermine the division between men and gods. This conscious inversion of the normal semantics of the phrase *mgo nag* 'black-headed' itself reveals the categorical separation of man and god usually implied by the use of the term *mgo nag*.

The passages examined so far establish beyond doubt that the phrase *mgo nag* 'black-headed' refers to mankind in general, both in opposition to gods and in opposition to animals. The phrase is particularly associated with the narrative of divine descent of a ruler, both in phrases such as 'the black-headed have no ruler' and in 'come as ruler of the black-headed'.

However, the narrative of divine descent occurs more frequently without the term *mgo nag* than with it. The phrase *mgo nag* as an epithet has the same meaning as *myi* 'man'. Therefore it is not surprising that the more straightforward term would sometimes appear instead of it. A possible additional reason for not using the term *mgo nag* is that, none of the passages where *myi (yul)* is used in place of *mgo nag* is any mention made of the divine leaders role vis-à-vis yaks. The word *myi* can be used whenever men are discussed *mgo nag,* the specific association laden term peculiar to

this context, necessarily invokes men as the wards of the divine leader and in opposition to the animals.

Most of the occurrences of the phrase *mgo nag* in Old Tibetan occur outside of the actual narration of the ruler's divine descent. In these passages the phrase serves as a short hand reminder of the myth. The most frequent context in which the phrase occurs is in descriptions of the Tibetan emperor's good governance and benefits to his subjects that his rule brings. Two passages in 'Prayers of the foundation of the De ga g.yu tshal monastery' (PT 0016, circa 823) make this clear.

> (33v1) rje lha sras-kyĭ zha snga-nas // «myĭ rje lhas mdzad-pas thugs-la 'phrul mnga' / lha'ĭ chos gtsug lag bzang-po rgyas-par mdzad-pa'ĭ thugs-rjes gnam mtha' 'og gun-du yang khyab / dbu rmog brtsan mnga' (33v2) thang che-ba'ĭ byĭn-kyĭs nĭ blon chen-po 'phags-pha-dang ldan-ba rje blon 'phrul-kyis ñĭ 'og-gĭ rgyal-po chen-po Rgya Drug las-stsogs-pa gdul dka'-zhĭng / sngan-cad bka' 'og-tu ma cud-pa'ĭ rnams-la (33v3) rlabs chen-pos btul-te / rgyal-po chen-po Rgya Drug-dang 'Jang las-stsogs-pha bka' 'og-du dus gcig-du 'dus-te / mjal-dum-gyĭ gtsigs chen-po bcas-te / Bod 'bangs mgo nag-po mtha yun-du (33v4) bde skyĭd-par gnang-ba'ĭ bka' drĭn chen-po stsald-pas kyang ma 'tsalte / mtha' bzhĭ thams cad-du bde-pa'ĭ bka' drin-kyis bkab-nas ...
>
> The son of god, the ruler says: «The divine ruler of men acting possesses sacred power in his heart. His compassion which greatly performs divine customs and good governance pervaded [all] below (*gun du*) heaven. The sacred minister and lord who has a noble great minister with the grandeur (*byin*) of a mighty helmet and great majesty [subdued] the great kings below the sun such as China and the Turks who are difficult to subdue, with great glory (*rlabs*) subdued those who are ma cud under the previous (?) commandment. The great kings such as China, the Turks and 'Jang (Nanzhao 南詔) gather together beneath the commandment. Have made a great peace treaty (*mjal dum*), bestowing great kindness which grants the black-headed Tibetan subjects happiness for a long time (*mtha yun du*), he did not seek [anything for himself], having blanketed all four directions with happy kindness ...
>
> *Bod chen-po 'phrul-kyĭ lha btsan-po sku-la byĭnd chags / thugs-la 'phrul mnga'-ba'ĭ zha snga-nas // (34v1) 'greng mgo nag-gĭ rjer myĭ rjer lha-las gshegs-te / rgyal khams gzhan-gyĭ rgyal-po gang-bas kyang 'phags-shĭng thugs-la 'phrul mnga' dgongs-pa nam-ka'ĭ dbyĭngs-dang 'dra-bar yangs-shĭng rgya che / ri-rab lhun-po bzhĭn-du bkra' drang (34v2) gsung rtag / gñĭ zla'ĭ 'od-dang 'dra bar / byams-pa-dang thugs-rjes khyab-par mdzad-de / mtha'-yun-gyĭ don-du dkon mcog gsum-gyĭ mcod-rten btsugs-shĭng dam-pa'ĭ chos bdud-rtsĭ'i sgo phye-nas ...*
>
> Come from the gods as lord to upright and black-headed (men), nobler than any kings of other kingdoms, the thought of the sacred majesty in his heart permeates and extends like the sky. His eternal word splendid and upright like mount Meru, acting with exceeding love and compassion like the light of the

> sun and moon, he plants the stūpa of the triple jewel for the benefit of the ages and opens the door of ambrosia of the sacred Dharma ...

This text was produced at the height of Buddhist influence at the imperial court, when the Buddhist monk Bran-ka Dpal-gyi yon-tan was the prime minister. Although it is heavily laden with Buddhist imagery and vocabulary, it is impressive that the overriding metaphor remains the pagan notion of the emperor as divinely sent caretaker of humanity.

Good governance and benefit to subjects are also prominent themes in the three contexts where the phrase *mgo nag* occurs in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287) apart from the attestation in the first chapter discussed above.

> *bla-na rje sgam-na / Khrĭ Srong-brtsan / 'og-na blon 'dzangs-na Stong-rtsan yul-zung / (447) rje nĭ gnam ri Pywa-'ĭ lugs // blon-po ni sa-'ĭ ngam len-gyi tshul // mnga' thang chen-po-'i rkyen-du / jĭ dang jir ldan-te / pyi-'i (448) chab srid nĭ pyogs bzhĭr bskyed // nang-gĭ kha bso ni myi ñams par lhun stug / 'bangs mgo nag-po yang mtho dman nĭ (449) bsñams / dpya' sgyu nĭ bskyungs / dal-du nĭ mchis / ston dpyid nĭ bskyal // 'khor bar nĭ spyad / 'dod-pa nĭ byin / (450) gnod-pa nĭ pye / btsan-ba nĭ bcugs / sdo-ba ni smad / 'jigs-pa nĭ mnan // bden-ba nĭ bsñen / 'dzangs-pa nĭ bstod / (451) dpa'-bo nĭ bkur / smon par nĭ bkol // chos bzang srĭd mtho-ste // myĭ yongs-kyis skyid-do //*
> Above, the profound lord, Khrĭ Srong-brtsan. Below, the wise minister Stong-rtsan Yul-zung. The lord [acted] in the manner of the Phywa and the heavenly mountains. The minister [acted] in the manner of earthly majesty. Endowed with all the conditions of great majesty (*mnga'-thang*), they increased the outer polity in the four directions and the internal welfare (*kha-bso*) was abundant and undiminished. They created parity between the high and the low among the black-headed subjects. They reduced tax fraud and created leisure. They swore [oaths] in the autumn and spring and adhered to this cycle. They gave to the needy and cut out the harmful. They employed the powerful and degraded the insolent (*sdo-ba*). They quashed the frightened and allied with the truthful. They praised the wise and respected the heroic. They employed the devoted. The customs being good and the polity lofty (*chos bzang srĭd mtho ste*), all men were happy.

Here the divine nature of the emperor is stressed, in contrast to the human nature of his minister. In a way similar to that used in the 'Envoys of Phywa to Dmu,' the mythical pre-story of the divine descent covers the happy ending in historic time. The emperor descends to earth in part against his will in order to benefit human beings, and here we see exactly how the emperor is capable of benefiting his subjects. They are all happy.

$ /:/ btsan-po khri ’dus srong // sku chung-nas gzhon-gyis kyang // phag rgod-la bshan-gyĭs mdzad / g.yag rgod sgog-du bcug // (329) stagĭ rna-ba-la bzung-ba-la stsogs-pa’ // thugs sgam-ba-’ĭ steng-du / sku rtsal ched-pos bsnan-te / myĭ-dang myi ’dra’-bar ’phags-pas (330) // ñĭ ngog rgyal-po thams-chad-dang / ’bangs mgo nag pyogs-kyis // mtshan bla dags ’phrul-gyi rgyal-po zhes / (331) btagste / bka’ mchid-kyi dper brjod-do //

Even from the time when emperor Khri ’dus-srong was young, he killed wild boar, put wild yaks into fetters, seized tigers by their ears, and so forth. On top of his profound mind he added great energy. Unlike men, he was exalted, and all the kings under the sun and the black-headed subjects attached to him the name “sacred king attached to the gods” (*bla dags ’phrul-gyi rgyal-po*), as it is said in the edict (*bka’-mchid*).

This passage stresses the emperor’s superhuman qualities, saying explicitly that he is not like men, and that his subjects and vassals referred to him as such. In the final passage, which uses the phrase *mgo nag* in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the benefit the emperor brings to his subjects is quite concrete.

’bangs (343) mgo nag-pos kyang / Rgya dar bzang-po khyab-par thob-bo //

The black-headed subjects obtained to their fill fine Chinese silks.

The subjects benefit from stealing spoils from the Chinese. By mentioning that the subjects are black-headed we are reminded that it is due to the beneficence of their monarch that they are able to benefit from the spoils of war. A similarly practical benefit of royal patronage is mentioned in the *Old Tibetan Annals* (IOL Tib J 0750 line 306).

’bangs mgo nag-poe khral thud scungs-par lo gcĭg/

[746-747] [The emperor] reduced the additional taxes of the black-headed subjects; so one year.

The emperor’s reduction of the tax burden is a reaffirmation of his sacred role of benefiting the relatively helpless humans he lives among. This tax reduction follows immediately after an oath of fealty that official ‘from the prime minster down’ (*blon chen po man chad*) swear. The oath and the change of tax burden are two components of the reaffirmation of his divine role. To a more cynical reader, the mention of a tax burden draws attention to the way in which this god-sent shepherd expropriates and exploits his flock.

The south face of the Zhol inscription (circa 764) makes clear the extent to which according to this ideology of divine descent the bodily well being of the ruler is tied to the welfare of the state.

(11) btsan-pho sras Khrĭ-srong-lde-brtsan-gyi (12) sku-la ni dard-du ñe// Bod (13) mgo nag po’i srid nĭ ‘khrug-du (14) byed-pa-las /

> [Ministers 'Bal Ldong-tsab and Lang Myes-zigs] came close to harming the body of the emperor, the son, Khri Srong-lde-brtsan, and put the polity of the black-headed Tibetans into strife. (Li and Coblin 1987: 143, 158)

That his own subjects would threaten the life of a Tibetan emperor is a reversal of the natural order of the universe. The use of the term black-headed in this passage emphasizes the need the Tibetans have for their ruler, and the unnaturalness of the conspirators crime. These associations would be absent if a different word for 'men' had been used.

The phrase *mgo nag* also occurs on the east side of the Zhol inscription.

> *(13) Bod (14) mgo nag-po'i srid-(15)-la phan-ba legs // (16) dgu byas-so ////*
> [Minister Stag-sgra-klu-khong] performed many goods beneficial to the polity of the black-headed Tibetans. (Li and Coblin 1987: 141, 152)

This phraseology puts the minister in a role similar to that of the emperor vis-à-vis the subjects, a very high compliment of of the minister's service.

Like Sha-khyi's reenactment of the divine founding act of the Tibetan monarchy, all of the passages using the phrase *mgo nag* – where the narration of divine descent is not actually related – gesture toward this myth and thereby reassert the Weltanschauung it implies.

Two attestations of the phrase *mgo nag* remain to be discussed. The first occurs in an obscure divination text IOL Tib J 0739. The terse and cryptic lines are difficult for me to make sense of. Although I am not in a position to argue the manner in which this text reinforces or evokes the formula of divine descent, there is also no reason to think that it does not. Instead, the formula probably provides the key to understanding the passage. I suspect that the images of the other lines are also formulaic, and the whole can be understood only after identifying and elaborating on the other mythic formulae which it employs.

> *kye bsam-dang ni (13r9) bka-bo che /*
> *na cung ni 'u gzhon-la /*
> *spyan dor ni ma gum shig (13r10)*
> *gros-gyis ni ma bshad-cig /*
> *sang byi ni gnangs sgong-du /*
> *'greng (13r11) 'dud ni 'du tshogs nas /*
> *'go nag nI brgyab stan sa /*
> *btsan-dang (13v1) ni kha yad mñam /*
> *mgyogs-dang ni bang yang 'grin (13v2)*
> *mo bzang rab-bo / /*
> [The role of the dice is] 2-4-1
> O, with a thought a great *bka bo*
> the small meadow (?), for that young one
> do not die in the two eyes!

> do not speak with advice!
> Tomorrow the rat, the day after tomorrow as an egg
> from the gathered upright (men) and bent (animals)
> the black-headed man *nI brgyab stan sa /*
> *btsan* (13v1) *dang ni kha yad mnyam /*
> with speed *ni bang yang 'grin* (13v2)
> a very good divination.

The final occurrence of *mgo nag* to be discussed, in the Dunhuang text IOL Tib J 0733, 'The Decline of the Good Age' presents a nightmarish apocalyptic inversion of the formula.

> *'ung-nas skyin-dang 'bab-pa'i (46) [d]usla sum brgya' drug cu las sa-dang / rgya' yul-gyi 'og / mtsho' chen-po zhigĭ pha-[rol]-nas rgyal-po g[d]o[ng] nag-po shing-[r]ta (47) nag-po zhon-ba zhig lo drug cu'i bar-du dang-te / rgya mgo nag-po de-la phyag-'tshal-zhing des bkol-bar 'ong-ngo' /*

> After that, in the time of falling and reckoning, beneath China and a land from among 360, from across a great lake a black faced king riding a black chariot for sixty years. To that black-headed Chinese [king] they will prostrate, and by him be made slaves.

Rather than the ruler being sent from heaven he comes from the other side of a lake. Rather than a god coming to rule the black-headed, he a human being, even worse Chinese, and is himself black-headed. Rather than making all subjects happy, he enslaves them. The term *mgo nag* in this passage, by evoking the narrative of divine descent, draws out the degree of the perversity of the future imagined. I think it is very clever that this black faced and riding a black chariot fit the general sense of being sinister. From this text alone, one would not realize that the term 'black-headed' has any special significance, but having looked at the other passages it is clear that it is the key term of the passage.

The full mythic formula of which *mgo nag* is an element can be paraphrased "men had no ruler, yaks no owner, N. came from the gods of heaven to the narrow earth to be the ruler of men and the owner of yaks". Any of the key phrases of this formula *rjer gshegs, rngog chag* or *mgo nag*, might synecdochally refer to the whole. These associations are present in all occurrences of the phrase *mgo nag* in Old Tibetan Texts. If one were writing a dictionary of Old Tibetan, a possible definition for *mgo nag* would be 'a poetic term for mankind as a totality, created by the gods and kept in safe pastures by the kings.' The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary gives this definition for Akkadian phrase *ṣalmaāt qaqqadi* 'black-headed'.[4]

4 The epithet black-headed is also used in other parts of Asia with more or less similarity: for Chinese see de Lacouperie (1891) and for Tangut see Kepping (2003).

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BKA' BRGYUD *MAHĀMUDRĀ*
"Chinese *rDzogs chen*" or the Teachings of the Siddhas?[1]

KLAUS-DIETER MATHES

1. Sa skya Paṇḍita's Critique of "Present-day *Mahāmudrā*"

The "new traditions" (*gsar ma*), most prominently the bKa' gdams pas and Sa skya pas, describe the time between the disintegration of the Tibetan empire and the establishment of a centralized political power at the end of the tenth century as a "dark period," a time when tantras were misunderstood and such Chinese Ch'an elements as the possibility of sudden enlightenment gained wide acceptance. The agenda of *gsar ma*, then, was to re-establish the "pure" Indian traditions and ban the "degenerate" forms of Buddhism from the "dark period." Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) claims, for example, that there was no difference between "present-day *mahāmudrā* and Chinese *rdzogs chen*," the Chinese master's tradition having been secretly changed to *mahāmudrā* after the royal rule had vanished. In the third chapter of his *sDom gsum rab dbye*, which is on tantric vows, Sa paṇ writes:

> No substantial difference exists between
> The present-day *mahāmudrā* and the *rdzogs chen*
> Of the Chinese tradition, other than a change
> In names from "descent from above" (*yas 'bab*)
> And "ascent from below" (*mas 'dzegs*) to "Simultaneist" and "Gradualist."[2]
> (III.167)

By present-day *mahāmudrā* Sa paṇ primarily meant controversial aspects of the bKa' brgyud teachings on *mahāmudrā*, such as the possibility of a sudden liberating realization or the possibility that a beginner may attain *mahāmudrā* even without any tantric empowerment. About the Indian *mahāmudrā* of Nāropa and Maitrīpa, namely the traditions most bKa' brgyud pas claim to follow, Sa paṇ says a little further down in the *sDom gsum rab dbye*:

> The *mahāmudrā* that Nāro[pa] and Maitrīpa taught
> Is the *karmamudrā*, *dharmamudrā*,

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1 Improvements to my English by Philip H. Pierce (Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu) are gratefully acknowledged.

2 *sDom gsum rab dbye* III.167 (Rhoton 2002:303): *da lta'i phyag rgya chen po dang / / rgya nag lugs kyi rdzogs chen la / / yas 'bab dang ni mas 'dzegs gnyis / / rim gyis pa dang cig char bar / / ming 'dogs bsgyur ba ma gtogs pa / / don la khyad par dbye ba med /*

Samayamudrā and *mahāmudrā*.
Precisely as maintained in the tantras
Of the secret Mantra[yāna].[3] (III.176-177)

To say that *mahāmudrā* is the four seals means that it contains within itself, on a relative level, the means by which it is attained. In *Hevajratantra* II.8.1-5, for example, *mahāmudrā* is looked upon as a beautiful *karmamudrā* on the level of apparent truth.[4] This demonstrates the tantric context of mahāmudrā practice, which is initiated with the help of a *karmamudrā*, that is, a tantric partner. This, however, requires a full-fledged empowerment within the system of Highest Yogatantra (Tib. *rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud*), along with the subsequent formal tantric practices of the generation and completion stages. Sa paṇ thus claims:

The King of Tantra and
Other great treatises also
Prohibit *mahāmudrā* [practice]
To one who has no link to the empowerments.[5] III.179

2. The Quotation from the *Caturmudrānvaya*

In the passage on present-day *mahāmudrā* from the third chapter of the *sDom gsum rab dbye*, Sa paṇ mainly relies on a quotation from the *Caturmudrānvaya* which cannot be identified (see further down). In the *sDom gsum rab dbye* we find:

In his *Caturmudrā[nvaya]*, Noble Nāgārjuna[6] said this:
If, through not having known the *karmamudrā*,
One is also ignorant of the *dharmamudrā*,

3 *sDom gsum rab dbye* III.176-177 (Rhoton 2002:304): *na ro dang ni me tri ba'i / / phyag rgya chen po gang yin pa / / de ni las dang chos dang ni / / dam tshig dang ni phyag rgya che / / gsang sngags rgyud nas ji skad du / / gsungs pa de nyid khong bzhed do /*

4 HT, 221_{2-6}: "Then the *yoginī*s asked: 'O bestower of bliss, tell us of what kind *mahāmudrā* is in its relative aspect?' (II.8.1) The illustrious one replied: '[Relative *mahāmudrā*] is neither excessively tall nor excessively short, neither [excessively] black nor [excessively] white; she has the colour of a lotus petal. Her breath is sweet-smelling. (II.8.2)....'" (*tatra pr̥cchanti yoginyo mahāmudrā tu kīdr̥śī / saṃvr̥tyākārarūpeṇa kathayasva sukhaṃ dada // bhagavān āha / nātidīrghā nātihrasvā na kr̥ṣṇā na ca gaurikā / padmapatranibhākārā śvāsas tasyāḥ sugandhakaḥ //*).

5 *sDom gsum rab dbye* III.179 (Rhoton 2002:304): */ rgyud kyi rgyal po gzhan dang ni / / bstan bcos chen po gzhan las kyang / / dbang bskur dag dang ma 'brel ba / / de la phyag rgya chen po bkag /*

6 The *Caturmudrānvaya* is contained in Maitrīpa's *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*, but the authorship of this important work on the four seals has remained a controversial issue. In his introduction to the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*, Rāmapāla attributes the *Caturmudrānvaya* to (the Tantric) Nāgārjuna, which is supported by the colophon in the Tibetan translation, but contested by Vibhūticandra (12th/13th century) in his *Amr̥takaṇikoddyotanibandha* (see Mathes 2009:90-91).

It is impossible for one to understand
Even the name *mahāmudrā*.[7] (178)

The picture Sa paṇ tries to draw with the help of this quotation is clear from the context of the *sDom gsum rab dbye*: After the *bar dar*, which was a dark period, we have a problem with Chinese (or rather Sino-Tibetan) Ch'an elements that found their way into Tibetan *mahāmudrā* systems. All that needs to be done, then, is to return to the pure Indian Buddhist traditions, in which the realization of *mahāmudrā* could only be the result of the tantric generation and perfection stages, and not simply through the suspension of thought processes brought on when the mind has been altered by devotion towards the master:

Nowadays, some give pointing out [instructions to the effect]
That *mahāmudrā* is the suspension of [even] the slightest thought
Brought on when the mind has been altered
By devotion towards a guru,
But it is possible that such [an effect may be the work] of a demon.[8] III.181a-182a

In his *Dohākoṣa*, Saraha claims, however, that the qualities of the guru can enter the mind of the disciple without a single mantra or tantra, and Maitrīpa's (ca. 1007–ca. 1085) disciple Rāmapāla, too, points into this direction. Before returning to this issue, it is necessary to discuss Sa paṇ's quotation, which is found in this form in neither the Sanskrit nor the Tibetan versions of *Caturmudrānvaya*. This was already noticed by the Fourth 'Brug chen Padma dkar po (1527-1596), who claims in his *Phyag chen rgyal ba'i gan mdzod*:

> Moreover, [Sa paṇ has said in his *sDom gsum rab dbye*, verse 178]: "In his *Caturmudrā[nvaya]*, Noble Nāgārjuna...."[9] This is not found in Nāgārjuna's text. Here, [Sa paṇ] said something other than [what we find in the *Caturmudrānvaya*, which reads as follows]: "Being satisfied [with what they have found], they have not even heard of the *dharmamudrā*. How [can] the uncontrived co-emergent nature arise for those who have not even heard of the *dharmamudrā*[, that is,] only through the contrived [practice of uniting with a] *karmamudrā*? It is [only] from a cause of a specific kind that a fruit of this [same] specific kind arises, and not from another kind. Just as the sprout of a *śālī*[-tree] but not a *kodrava*[-plant] arises from a *śālī*-seed, so too the

7 *sDom gsum rab dbye* III.178 (Rhoton 2002:304): */ 'phags pa klu sgrub nyid kyis kyang / / phyag rgya bzhi par 'di skad gsung / / las kyi phyag rgya ma shes pas / / chos kyi phyag rgya 'ang mi shes na / / phyag rgya chen po'i ming tsam yang / / rtogs pa nyid ni mi srid gsung /*

8 *sDom gsum rab dbye* III.181a-182a (Rhoton 2002:304): */ deng sang 'ga' zhig bla ma yi / / mos gus tsam gyis sems bsgyur nas / / rtog pa cung zad 'gags pa la / / phyag rgya chen po'i ngo sprod byed / / de 'dra bdud kyi yin pa'ang srid /*

9 See above.

> uncontrived co-emergent arises from the uncontrived nature of the *dharmamudrā*. From the *dharmamudrā* [acting] as a cause, *mahāmudrā*, which is not seperable [from its cause], thus arises."[10]

A preliminary summary of this issue was published by Broido (1987), which elicited two strong reactions from David Jackson (1990 & 1994). A comparison with the Sanskrit texts clearly shows, however, that the Padma dkar po quotation perfectly accords with the Sanskrit in meaning, namely that the uncontrived *dharmamudrā*—not the contrived *karmamudrā*—is the cause of *mahāmudrā*. The translation of this passage from the Sanskrit is as follows:

> Being satisfied [with what they have found], they have not even heard of the *dharmamudrā*. How [can] the uncontrived [wisdom] called co-emergent arise for those who have not even heard of the *dharmamudrā*[, that is,] only through the contrived [practice of uniting with a] *karmamudrā*? It is [only] from a cause of a specific kind that a fruit of this [same] specific kind arises, and not from another kind. Just as the sprout of a *śālī*[-tree] and not a *kodrava*[-plant] arises from a *śālī*-seed, the uncontrived co-emergent arises from the presence of the uncontrived *dharmamudrā*. Therefore, it is only the *dharmamudrā* that is the cause of *mahāmudrā* (to apply figuratively a distinction [between a cause and an effect] to what [in fact admits of] no [such] distinction).[11]

The *Caturmudrānvaya* clearly says here that the contrived *karmamudrā* is not a sufficient base from which to attain *mahāmudrā*, for it cannot be the actual cause of something uncontrived. This is clear, too, from Maitrīpa's *Sekanirdeśa* and its commentaries, for all of which the *Caturmudrānvaya* is the basic text. According to them a good empowerment and subsequent practice presupposes the yogin has identified

10 Padma dkar po: *Phyag chen rgyal ba'i gan mdzod*, 62-63: *yang / 'phags pa klu sgrub nyid kyis kyang / phyag rgya bzhi par 'di skad gsungs / las kyi phyag rgya mi shes pas / / chos kyi phyag rgya'ang mi shes na / / phyag rgya chen po'i ming tsam yang / / rtogs pa nyid ni mi srid gsungs / / 'di ni klu sgrub kyi lung las ma byung zhing / der ni de las logs pa zhig gsungs te / de la dga' zhing mgu bas chos kyi phyag rgya'i gtam tsam yang mi shes so / / chos kyi phyag rgya mi shes pas las kyi phyag rgya bcos ma 'ba' zhig las ma bcos pa'i lhan cig skyes pa'i rang bzhin 'byung zhing skye bar ga la 'gyur / rigs mthun pa'i rgyu las rigs mthun pa'i 'bras bu skye bar 'gyur gyi / rigs mi mthun pa las ni ma yin no / / ji ltar sā lu'i sa bon las sā lu'i myu gu skye bar 'gyur gyi / ko ṭa pa las ni ma yin no / / de bzhin du ma bcos pa'i chos kyi phyag rgya'i rang bzhin las ma bcos pa'i lhan cig skyes pa 'byung ngo / de'i phyir chos kyi phyag rgya'i rgyu las mi phyed pa'i phyag rgya chen po skye bar 'gyur ro / / zhes 'byung bas so /*

11 CMA, $96_{6\text{-}14}$: *saṃtuṣṭāś ca santo dharmamudrāyā vārttām api na jānanti / dharmamudrām ajānatāṃ kevalayā karmamudrayā kr̥trimayā katham akr̥trimabhūtaṃ sahajākhyam utpadyate / svajātīyāt kāraṇāt svajātīyasyaiva kāryasyotpattir bhavati na tu vijātīyāt / yathā śālībījāt śālyaṅkurotpattir bhavati nanu kodravasya / tathā dharmamudrāyā akr̥trimāyāḥ sakāśād akr̥trimaṃ sahajam utpadyate / tasmād dharmamudraiva kāraṇam abhede bhedopacāreṇa mahāmudrāyāḥ /*

the co-emergent joy in between supreme joy and the joy of no joy at the moment of freedom from defining characteristics.[12] The goal of co-emergent joy, which resembles the ultimate co-emergent, or *mahāmudrā*, can thus be identified on the basis of the non-dual moment at the peak of *karmamudrā* practice in between the moments of maturation and relaxation. A correct realization of this non-dual experience as empty (only then it becomes a Buddhist goal in the eyes of Maitrīpa) depends on pith instructions of the guru, and not on forms of recognition induced by the drop of *bodhicitta* in various locations inside or between the sexual organs.[13] Maitrīpa’s conception of the four moments and four joys of a good empowerment can be best seen from his *Caturmudropadeśa*:

1) Starting from exterior activities [such as embracing and kissing] up to the final arousing, [this is when the first] joy related to [the moment of] the manifold [is experienced].
2) The experience [from that point] up until [the drop of *bodhicitta*] has reached the tip of the jewel is [the moment of] maturation. It is supreme joy.
3) The illustrious one taught: “Holding the sixteen drops twice halved.”[14] Two (of what is thus present in the form of four drops) at the tip of the jewel and two on the stamen of the lotus [correspond to the moment of] freedom from defining characteristics, [related to] co-emergent joy.
4) When all four drops are inside the lotus, [it is the moment of] relaxation, [the joy of] no joy.[15]

12 SN, 48_{5-10}: “The [moment of the] manifold [appearances comes first]; then there is [the moment of] maturation. The third [moment] is freedom from defining characteristics. It should be known that [the moment of] relaxation is after [that], [the sequence of] forceful yoga being rejected. (SN 2) If relaxation is the reflection [upon having experienced bliss], how can it be taken to be in the third [position]? For at that time there [can]not be reflection [and whatever] awareness [there is] should be without defining characteristics [at this stage]. (SN 3) Come on, it is therefore appropriate that the moment of freedom from defining characteristics be recognized in the third [position]. This [can] be established on the basis of your own experience, And even the meaning of scriptures is suitable [here].” (SN 4) (*citraṃ tato vipākaḥ syāt tr̥tīye tu vilakṣaṇam / vimardaś ca tato jñeyo haṭhayoganirākr̥teḥ //* (SN 2)) *ālocanaṃ vimardaś cet tr̥tīye katham iṣyate / yat tatrālocanaṃ naiva bhaved vittir alakṣaṇā /* (SN 3) *vilakṣaṇam ato yuktaṃ [hanta boddhuṃ*[a]*] tr̥tīyake / svasaṃvitter*[b] *bhavet siddhir āgamārtho ’pi saṃgataḥ //* (SN 4)
[a] E_{Sh} *hantuṃ roddhuṃ* [b] E_{S} *svasaṃvittir*

13 SN, 54_{10-11}: “True reality is not held to be inside the *vajra* or its tip, or fallen into the *kapāla* (i.e., the vagina), or moving in between. As for understanding [true reality], it [comes] from the mouth of the guru.” (*vajragarbhe tadagre vā patitaṃ vā kapālake / na ceṣṭam antarāle ’pi tattvaṃ vittau guror mukhāt //*)

14 MNS, 107: *ṣoḍaśārdhārdhabindudhr̥k /*

15 CMU (B 11b6-12a2 ; P 233a3-5) : *phyi rol gyi bya ba nas bskyod pa’i mthar thug pa’i bar ni*[a] *rnam pa sna tshogs pa’i dga’ ba’o / rin po che’i mthar thug par*[b] *nyams su myong ba ni rnam par smin pa ste / mchog dga’o / bcom ldan ’das kyis / bcu drug phyed phyed thig le ’chang*[c] */ / zhes*

In his *Guruparamparākrama-Upadeśa*, Maitrīpa's disciple Vajrapāṇi elaborates the third point as follows:

> Now in order to teach the co-emergent [joy]— [the Buddha] taught in the *Mahāmāyātantra*:
>
> > He holds the sixteen drops twice halved.
> > He is [both] without phases and beyond phases.[16]
>
> In the *cakra* of great bliss (at the crown of the head), the letter *haṃ* melts into light. Half of sixteen is eight. Half of this is the four drops. Two are released into the vagina, and two remain evenly [divided between] the opening of the lord of the family and the crown of the beautiful. This is as stated in the following:
>
> > Two (i.e., joy and supreme joy) have passed, and in the interval between the [remaining] two (i.e., co-emergent joy and joy of no joy),[17] which are the same,
> > [The drop] sets out from the *vajra* and touches the *padma*.
> > What has set out from the *vajra* is [the drop of] Akṣobhya.[18]

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bya bas[d] */ thig le bzhi'i gzugs kyis*[e] *bzhugs pa las / gnyis ni rdo rje rtse mo'i cha la gnas / gnyis ni padma'i ze'u 'bru'i cha la gnas pa ni*[f] *mtshan nyid dang bral ba ste / lhan cig skyes dga'o / thig le bzhi char*[g] *padma'i cha la gnas pa ni rnam pa nyed (*text: *med) pa ste / dga' bral lo /*
[a] P *pa ni* [b] P *pa* [c] BP *can* [d] P *ba'i* [e] P *kyi* [f] P *pa'i* [g] P *char yang*

16 These two lines are also found in *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* X.3bc: *ṣoḍaśārdhārdhabindudhr̥k / akalaḥ kalanātītaś....* Raviśrījñāna's *Amr̥takaṇikā* (AKUN, $90_{6\text{-}14}$) on these two lines is as follows: "Holding the sixteen drops twice halved is referred to as the great *prajñā*-wisdom by the Tathāgatas. ... Half of sixteen is eight. Half of these are the four drops whose defining characteristics are body, speech, mind, and wisdom. They produce the states of waking, dream, deep sleep and the fourth [state]. He holds them means that he is holding the drop of sixteen twice halved. [And this] means that he is the protector of the fourfold *samaya*, Vajrasattva, the one with great passion. 'Without phases' means without the fifteen phases of the bright fortnight. He is situated at the end of them. [This means that] he is beyond the phases, [that is,] at the termination of the full moon. Nor is he situated in the phase of the first [day of] the dark fortnight; he is beyond phases. This is the co-emergent." (*ṣoḍaśārdhārdhābindudhr̥k (!) mahāprajñājñānam ity ucyate tathāgataiḥ / ... ṣoḍaśānāṃ kalānām arddham aṣṭau tadarddhaṃ catvāro bindavaḥ kāyavākcittajñānalakṣaṇāḥ / jāgratsvapnasuṣuptituryāvasthājanakāḥ / tān dhārayatīti ṣoḍaśārddhārddhabindudhr̥k / samayacatuṣṭayapālakaḥ (!) vajrasattvo mahārāga ity arthaḥ / akalaḥ śuklapakṣapañcadaśakalārahitaḥ / tāsām ante sthitaḥ śuklapūrṇimāvasāne kalanātita iti / kalanā kr̥ṣṇapratipat tatrāpratiṣṭhitaḥ kalanātitaḥ sahaja ity arthaḥ /*).

17 There is only one single drop, that passes through sixteen positions (the four parts of the central channel between the *cakra*s correspond to the four joys, each of which is again divided into four joys). When the descending drop has reached the section between the navel and the secret place, the four joys must be experienced again in sequential order. "Two have passed" thus means that the drop has passed the positions where joy and supreme joy must be identified (according to Khenpo Phuntsok).

18 I.e., the Akṣobhya seal of Yogācāra emptiness.

And once it touches the *padma* it [becomes the drop of] Vajra[sattva].[19]
The cause is [first] sealed by the fruit.
The fruit is [then] sealed by the cause.[20]
He (i.e., the yogin) is the king of great bliss.[21]

Therefore two drops have been released and two remain the same. What abides in the opening of the lord of the family is [the physical drop of] Akṣobhya, that is, the experience in the form of self-awareness. It is the means. What abides at the crown of the beautiful is [the real drop of] Vajrasattva, namely, emptiness and lack of an own-being. It is insight (*prajñā*). The cause, Akṣobhya is sealed by the fruit, Vajrasattva. This removes the extreme of permanence causing [the realization that] experience is without an own-being. Moreover, Vajrasattva is sealed by Akṣobhya. This removes the extreme of annihilation, causing the experience itself of the lack of an own-being. Thus, experience and emptiness are united as a pair.[22]

To come back to the *Caturmudrānvaya*, such instructions represent an element of the *dharmamudrā*, with which *karmamudrā* must be combined, and it is only this element of *dharmamudrā* which connects up with *mahāmudrā*. In reality, the latter two seals are indivisible, the tiny part of *mahāmudrā* which shines through on the basis of pith instructions being what is called *dharmamudrā*.[23]

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19 I.e., the Vajrasattva seal of Madhyamaka emptiness.

20 These two lines mean that bliss and emptiness are experienced as being united as a pair (see below).

21 GPKU (B 309b5-310a2; P 198b4-7): *da ni lhan cig skyes pa bstan pa'i phyir / rgyud chen sgyu 'phrul drwa ba las / bcu drug phyed phyed thig le 'chang*[a] */ / yan lag med pa'i rtsis las 'das / / zhes gsungs te / bde ba chen po'i 'khor* ([b]*lo na*[b]) *yi ge haṃ 'od du zhu nas bcu drug gi phyed brgyad / brgyad kyi phyed thig le bzhi ste / gnyis ka kko*[c] *lar lhung nas / gnyis rigs kyi bdag po'i kha dang mdzes ma'i spyi bo na mnyam par gnas so / / de'ang 'di skad du / gnyis 'das*[d] *gnyis ni mnyam pa'i dbus / / rdo rje nas lhung padmar reg / mi bskyod rdo rje nas lhung ba / / rdo rje padma la reg pa / / rgyu la 'bras bus*[e] *rgyas btab cing / / 'bras bu la yang rgyus*[f] *gdab / / 'di ni bde chen rgyal po yin zhes gsungs pas /*
[a] BP *can* [b] P *lo'i* [c] P *ko* [d] BP *gnas* [e] B *bu'i* [f] B *rgyu'i*

22 GPKU (B 310a2-5; P 198b7-199a2): *thig le gnyis lhung nas / gnyis mnyam par gnas te / de'ang rigs kyi bdag po'i kha na gnas pa ni*[a] *mi bskyod pa ste / rang rig pa nyid nyams su myong ba* ([a]*de ni*[a]) *thabs so / / mdzes ma'i spyi bo na gnas pa ni rdo rje sems dpa' ste / stong pa nyid rang bzhin med pa de*[a] *ni shes rab bo / / 'bras bu rdo rje sems dpas*[b] *rgyu mi bskyod pa la rgyas btab pas rtag pa'i mtha' bsal nas / nyams su myong ba nyid rang bzhin med par byed do / / yang mi bskyod pas rdo rje sems dpa' la rgyas btab pas chad pa'i mtha' bsal nas / rang bzhin med pa nyid nyams su myong bar byed do / de ltar na nyams su myong ba dang stong pa nyid zung du 'jug pa'o /*
[a] P omits [b] P *pa yis*

23 Mathes 2009:108-110.

3. *Mahāmudrā* and the Sequence of the Four Seals

This leads to the question whether the four joys[24] must be first experienced on a physical level during union with a *karmamudrā*, as Maitrīpa's disciple Devacandra[25] claims in his *Prajñājñānaprakāśa*,[26] or not. In other words, are there also other means of inducing a non-dual experience in order to identify the goal? For Maitrīpa, the answer seems to be yes for in his *Tattvaviṃśikā* different approaches for practitioners of varying capacities are distinguished:

> Those with inferior capacities have perfectly cultivated the circle[27]
> With the help of the *karma-* and *samayamudrā*s.
> Having [thus] turned away from [directly engaging with] purity and true reality,
> They meditate on enlightenment [in this indirect way].[28] (TV 7)
>
> Union with a *jñānamudrā* (i.e., a visualized consort)
> With Mañjuvajra and so forth as chief [deities]—
> [All this] being neither true nor false appearance—
> [Is the practice of] yogins with average faculties.[29] (TV 8)
> ...
> The yogin who has seen true reality, however,
> Is wholly devoted to *mahāmudrā*;
> He abides as one whose faculties are of the highest order
> in [the realization of the] nature of all entities.[30] (TV 11)

Rāmapāla, too, sees in *evaṃ* first of all the acoustic reality of the *dharmamudrā*, *e-* standing for insight (*prajñā*) and *-vaṃ* for means (*upāya*). Karopa, another disciple of Maitrīpa, explains that only those persons who cannot comprehend such a *dharmamudrā*, rely on *evaṃ* as a *karmamudrā*.[31] In other words, a *karmamudrā* is optional; in no way is it a prerequisite for initiating a sequence of seals.

Moreover, in his commentary on *Sekanirdeśa* 23, Rāmapāla maintains that, in the context of the four seals, the *karmamudrā* is taken as the master empowerment cor-

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24 I.e., joy, supreme joy, co-emergent joy, and [the joy of] no joy.

25 According to the Peking bsTan 'gyur, *rgyud 'grel*, vol. *mi*, fol. 99a4) and the "Bu ston gsan yig", 116_1. In the Blue Annals (Roerich 1949-1953) we find "Devākaracandra" (read: Divākaracandra?), and in the Rgya gzhung dkar chag (fol. 22b2) "Deva-ākarendra."

26 Mathes 2011:111-112.

27 I.e., the *maṇḍala*, the union with a consort and so forth.

28 TV, $68_{5\text{-}6}$: *karmasamayamudrābhyāṃ cakraṃ niṣpādya bhāvitāḥ / dhyāyanti mr̥davo bodhiṃ śuddhatattvabahirmukhāḥ //*

29 TV, $68_{7\text{-}8}$: *jñānamudrāsamāpannaṃ mañjuvajrādināyakam / na satyaṃ na mr̥□ākāram ātmānaṃ madhyayoginaḥ /*

30 TV, $70_{1\text{-}2}$: *dr̥ṣṭatattvaḥ punar yogī mahāmudrāparāyaṇaḥ / sarvabhāvasvabhāvena vihared uttamendriyaḥ //*

31 Mathes 2009:94.

responding to the perfect completion stage.[32] *Dharmamudrā*, on the other hand, is related to a central practice of the outer creation phase, namely the purification of phenomena by means of the fivefold enlightenment.[33] Rather than a progressive succession from *karmamudrā* to *dharmamudrā*, this suggests the possibility of an alternative path, starting with the outer creation phase, or causal *samayamudrā* (without any apparent *karmamudrā*). Does this mean that an empowerment is possible, then, without a *karmamudrā*? And how about the vase empowerments?

As a commentary on the *Caturmudrānvaya* the *Sekanirdeśa* begins its presentation of empowerment with the succession of the four seals. This means that Maitrīpa concerns himself directly with the third empowerment. In Bu ston’s record of received teachings we are told that the *Sekanirdeśa* was composed in order to distinguish good from bad empowerments,[34] a distinction that perhaps does not apply to the first six vase empowerments. On the other hand, for empowerment in Maitrīpa’s system to start directly with the *prajñā*-wisdom empowerment is not completely ruled out. In his *Nairātmyāprakāśa*, Maitrīpa terms the ordinary creation stage an optional practice, not a necessary requirement for the subsequent stages:

> Possessing the pride of being Nairātmyā, one is identical with her. Here, in order to perform the six-branch yoga, she must be cultivated [as appearing] in the colours black, red, yellow, green, blue, and white in that order.[35] As the vividness of meditation increases, she first appears as the full-moon covered by clouds. Then, with even greater vividness, she appears as an illusion. Then, with even more vividness, she manifests as if in a dream. Immediately after that, with the full maturation of vividness, the *mahāmudrā* yogin succeeds [in reaching the goal of this practice], attaining [a state] in which dreams and the waking state are not different. This is the creation stage.

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32 SNP (C 15b4; Pe 13b1-2): “But in the context of the four seals it is the *karmamudrā* which should be known as the master [empowerment] in virtue of its correspondence to the perfect [completion stage].” (*caturmudrāpakṣe ca pariniṣpannenācāryatvena karmamudrā boddhavyā /*)

33 SNP (C 16b3-6; Pe 14a7-b1): “Then, inasmuch as phenomena such as blue and yellow [ones], which have first been purified [by perceiving them] as deities by way of the fivefold enlightenment, are in a state of being without a perceived object and so forth, *dharmamudrā* is supreme joy, the means of unique beauty. It has the nature of *dharmadhātu*, is reached by analysis, and its form is non-abiding. While it is the immediate cause of *mahāmudrā*, and so productive of excellent maturation on the path, *dharmamudrā* is also the fruit of maturation, and in this moment of maturation there is supreme joy.” (*tato dharmāṇāṃ nīlapītādīnāṃ pañcākārābhisam*[a]*bodhyā*[b] *prathamaṃ devatāviśo*[c]*dhitānāṃ grāhyatvādi*[d]*rahitatayā paramānandaikasundaropāyabhūtā / dharmadhātusvabhāvā vicārāga*[e]*tāpra*[e]*tiṣṭhānarūpā yā*[f] *sā dharmamudrā // iyaṃ ca mahāmudrāyāḥ saṃ*[g]*nikr̥ṣṭakāra*[h]*ṇatvena*[h] *mā*[i]*rgatayā viśiṣṭapākatvād vipākaphalaṃ / tasmiṃś ca vipākakṣaṇe paramānandaḥ /*)
[a] C *saṃ-* [b] C *–dhyāḥ* [c] C *–so-* [d] Pe *grāhyādi-* [e] Pe *-tā ’pra-* [f] C *mudrā* [g] CPe *san-* [h] C illegible, Pe *-ṇatvana* [i] C *mā-* inserted by another hand.

34 “Bu ston gsan yig”, 116_6: *dbang bzang ngan ’byed pa dbang nges bstan.*

35 Lit. “...the colours black, red, yellow, green, blue, and white must be cultivated in that order.”

> Alternatively, the *bodhicitta* that arises from the union of the penis and the vagina and has the nature of great bliss, located between supreme [joy and the joy of] no joy (i.e., co-emergent joy), [and inasmuch as] it has the nature of the fifteen [moon] parts, should be instantly seen as having the nature of the fifteen yoginīs, who appear with the previously mentioned colours and attributes. This is because it is the nature of the five *skandha*s, four elements, six objects, body, speech, and mind. This is the profound creation stage.[36]

In other words, if Maitrīpa considered it possible to start directly with *karmamudrā* practice, then empowerment could start on this level, or at a still further advanced level, so that a "*mahāmudrā* empowerment"[37] outside of the system of the four seals, or even a direct introduction into the nature of mind,[38] does not seem altogether implausible. The possibility of such a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* is clearly addressed in Sahajavajra's *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā*.[39] This, after all, would be what 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal[40] and

36 NP, 262b-264a (Unpublished edition of the *Nairātmyāprakāśa* by Harunaga Isaacson), quoted from "*Sekanirdeśapañjikā*: Notes (3), Handout 4 July, 2007)": *nairātmyāhaṃkāram udvahan nairātmyāsamo bhavet / atra ca ṣaḍaṅgayogavyavasthārtham anukrameṇa kr̥ṣṇaraktapītaharita-nīlaśuklavarṇā bhāvanīyāḥ / tatra bhāvanāprakarṣaprakrameṇa prathamaṃ meghasaṃchanna pūrṇacandravad bhāti / tato 'pi prakarṣān māyāvad bhāti / tato 'pi prakarṣāt svapnavat prakāśate / tadantaraṃ prakarṣaparipākāt svapnajāgradaśayor abhedaprāpto mahāmudrāyogī sidhyati / ity utpattikramaḥ / anyatra bolakakkolasaṃyogān mahāsukharūpi paramavira-mamadhyagabodhicittaṃ jāyate yat tad eva pañcadaśakalātmakaṃ jhaṭiti pūrvoktavarṇacihna-saṃsthānapañcadaśayoginīrūpaṃ paśyet / tasya hi pañcaskandhacaturdhātuṣaḍviṣayakāyavāk-cittasvabhāvatvāt / iti gambhīrotpattikramaḥ /*

37 In his commentary on the *Caturmudrānvaya*, Karopa refers to the fourth empowerment in this way (see Mathes 2009:118).

38 See below.

39 Mathes 2008:40.

40 'Gos Lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal: *Deb ther sngon po*, vol. 2, $1133_{5\text{-}16}$: "The teachings of the later [*sDug bsngal zhi byed*] transmission were called 'Cycle relating to the Method [known as] the Drop of Stainless *Mahāmudrā*.' [The term] *mahāmudrā* denotes here the actual *mahāmudrā* system of Maitrīpa, since Dam pa sangs rgyas (d. 1105) had been a personal disciple of Maitrīpa. 'Stainless' refers to genuine teachings. 'Method' means that it contains a path of realization that slightly differs from other teachings. [Dam pa sangs rgyas] stated that it is in essence the Pāramitā[yāna] and in accord with the secret Mantra[yāna]. In the commentary on Maitrīpa's *Tattvadaśaka*, too, this tradition is found [and described as conforming to] the Pāramitāyāna; the conduct [propounded by it], which accords with the secret Mantra[yāna], is similar to the exposition in the *Hevajra[tantra]*. Since it is not based on deity yoga and lacks the sequence of the four seals, [Sahajavajra] taught that it does not [fall under] the secret Mantra[yāna]. It is obvious that [the system of Dam pa sangs rgyas] conforms to it." (*brgyud pa phyi ma'i chos rnams la phyag rgya chen po dri med thigs pa phyag bzhes kyi skor zhes pa'i mtshan btags / phyag rgya chen po ni dam pa sangs rgyas mai trī (*text: *tri) pa'i dngos slob yin pas mai trī (*text: *tri) pa'i phyag rgya chen po de nyid yin / dri med ni dam pa'i gsung rnams la bya / phyag bzhes ni bstan pa gzhan rnams dang cung zad mi 'dra ba'i sgrub pa'i srang (*text: *srangs) yod pa la zer / de yang ngo bo pha rol tu phyin pa gsang sngags dang rjes su mthun pa zhes bya ste / mai trī (*text: *tri) pa'i de kho na nyid bcu pa'i 'grel par yang lugs de pha rol tu phyin pa yin pa la / gsang sngags dang rjes su mthun pa'i spyod pa bya tshul kye'i rdo rje las bshad pa dang*

Thu’u khwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma[41] mean by a *mahāmudrā* tradition which is “not based on deity yoga and without the sequence of the four seals”.

Of particular interest is the account of Śavaripa’s empowerment in the “History of the Twenty-Five Texts of the *Amanasikāra* Cycle.” At age fifty-three, Maitrīpa went to see his prophesied guru, Śavaripa, in the mountainous area of Śrī Parvata. The critical scholar at first was wary of the teachings of Śavaripa, while a yoginī in the company of Śavaripa for her part had doubts whether Maitrīpa would be a qualified recipient, whereupon Śavaripa and his entourage disappeared. Maitrīpa went in search of the guru again, and after some time found him and received empowerment. The way the empowerment was bestowed must have been unusual enough to cause Maitrīpa to be on his guard. It can be ruled out that this initial reluctance reflected a general reservation about everything tantric, because by this time Maitrīpa had already received five years of Vajrayāna education with Rājavajra.[42] In the account, Śavaripa is said to have bestowed the empowerment only with a golden vase in his hand. This was followed either by instructions relating to the four seals or by a song containing *mahāmudrā* pith instructions:

> Holding a golden vase in his hand, [Śavaripa] gave [Maitrīpa] an empowerment. Bal po [Asu][43] said that after the empowerment [Śavaripa] gave instructions relating to the four seals, [but] according to Ti pu [pa][44] [he] composed [the following] song [of] commitment (*samaya*):
>
> Once the natural mind has been purified,
> The guru’s qualities enter your heart.
> Realizing this, Saraha sang this song,
> Though he had not seen a single tantra, a single mantra.
> Once the guru’s words have entered your heart,
> It is like seeing a treasure in the palm of your hand.[45]
> When on the path of not becoming mentally engaged—*mahāmudrā*—
> Do not entertain hopes of any fruition whatsoever.
> If you yourself realize the true nature of mind, this is *mahāmudrā*.
> What appears in this way is nothing outside your own mind.

’dra ba zhig byung / lha’i rnal ’byor la brten pa ma yin zhing phyag rgya bzhi’i rjes su gro ba med pas gsang sngags ni ma yin no zhes gsungs pa de dang mthun par snang /)

41 Thu’u bkvan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma: *Thu’u bkvan grub mtha’*, 167: *lugs de pha rol tu phyin pa la / gsang sngags dang rjes su mthun pa’i spyod pa bya tshul kye rdo rje las bshad pa dang ’dra ba zhig byung [/] lha’i rnal ’byor la brten pa ma yin zhing / phyag rgya bzhi’i rjes su ’gro ba med pas gsang sngags ni ma yin no /*

42 See Brunnhölzl 2007:128.

43 Bal po Asu was a Nepalese disciple of Vajrapāṇi. See Schaeffer 2005:63.

44 Ti pu pa was a direct disciple of both Nāropa and Maitrīpa (Roerich 1949-1953:437).

45 The first six verses are identical with Saraha’s *Dohākośagīti* (Shahidullah 1928:139$_{9\text{-}12}$): *ṇiamaṇa sabbe sohia jabbê guruguṇa hiyae païsaï tabbê / eba amaṇe muṇi sarahê gāhiu tanta manta ṇaü ekka bi cāhiu //*; and 131$_{26\text{-}27}$: *jaï gurubuttabo hiahi païsaï ṇihia hatthaṭṭhia bia u dīsaï.*

> The empowerment having been bestowed in such a way, Maitrīpa did not believe [in it] and harboured doubts.[46]

It should be noted that Śavaripa's song is wholly in the tradition of Saraha's *dohā*s. Verses no. 7 and 8 are nearly identical with the following passage in Saraha's (or Śavaripa's)[47] *Mahāmudropadeśa*:

> As to [the path on which] you should not beome mentally engaged—*mahāmudrā*—
> Do not entertain hopes of any fruition whatsoever.[48]

Saraha continues:

> The hoping mind has never arisen;
> What is the use, then, of things abandoned or attained?
> If there were something to be attained through anything—
> Enough of [these] four seals which [yogins] adore![49]

While Bal po Asu's version of the empowerment presupposes a more formal tantric context, Ti pu pa's suggests that Śavaripa was merely pointing out the true nature of mind. The latter depends on the guru's qualities and the purity of the disciple's mind rather than perforce on the four seals. The fact that two contradictory versions of Śavaripa's empowerment are reported in the History of the Twenty-Five Texts of the *Amanasikāra* Cycle is convincing evidence that in India there was already a *mahāmudrā* tradition that was not specifically tantric.

4. Blending *Mahāmudrā* with the Sūtras

A closer look at the defintion of *mahāmudrā* in the *Caturmudrānvaya* gives us an idea of how an originally tantric system was blended with the Sūtras, in this case the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*:

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46 Kun dga' rin chen (?) (ed.): *'Bri gung bka' brgyud chos mdzod*, vol. ka, 176b1-4: *...gser gyi bum pa phyag du bsnams (*text: *snams) nas / / dbang bskur te (*text: *ste) de yang bal po'i bzhed pas dbang bskur ba'i rjes la phyag rgya bzhi'i gdams ngag bstan zer / / ti (*text: *te) pu'i bzhed pas dam tshig mgur (*text: *'gur) du bzhengs pa / / gnyug ma'i sems ni gang tshe thams cad sbyang gyur pa'i / / de tshe bla ma'i yon tan snying la 'jug par 'gyur / / 'di ltar rtogs nas mda' bsnun glu len te / / sngags dang rgyud gnyis kyang ma mthong ngo / / bla mas smras pa gang gi snying zhugs pas / / lag pa'i mthil (*text: *'thil) du gnas pa'i gter mthong 'dra / / yid la mi byed phyag rgya chen po'i lam / / 'bras bu gang la yang re ba ma byed cig / rang gis sems nyid rtogs na phyag rgya chen po ste / / 'di ltar snang ba 'di yang rang gi sems las logs na med / / ces dbang bskur bas mai tri pas yid ma ches ste the tshom (*text: *tsom) skyes pa dang /*

47 The attribution is uncertain.

48 "Do ha mdzod phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag." *Nges don phyag chen mdzod*. vol. *ā*, 76b1: *yid la byar med phyag rgya chen po ni / / 'bras bu gang du'ang re bar ma byed cig /*

49 *Ibid.*, 76b1-2: *re ba'i sems ni gdod nas ma skyes pas / / spang dang thob pa'i dngos po ci zhig yod / / gal te gang gis thob pa'i dngos yod na / / bsten pa'i phyag rgya rnam bzhis ci zhig byed /*

> *Āḥ*. As to *mahāmudrā*, it is both big and a seal; hence a "big seal" (*mahāmudrā*). It lacks an own-being, is free from the hindrances of the knowable and so forth. It resembles an immaculate daytime-sky in autumn, and is the basis of everything perfect. It has the identity of [cyclic] existence and *nirvāṇa* as its nature, consists of universal compassion, and has the unique form of great bliss.
>
> Moreover, we have [in the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*?]:
>
>> The [mental] factors involved in becoming mentally disengaged are beneficial.
>> Those involved in becoming mentally engaged are not beneficial.[50]
>
> In the [same] text [, i.e., the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*, it has been said]:
>
>> Homage to You, who is without imagined thoughts,
>> Whose intellect is not based [on anything], who is without recollection,
>> Who has become mentally disengaged,
>> And who is without any cognitive object.[51]
>
> This[, too,] is called *mahāmudrā*. Through this *mahāmudrā*, which is inconceivable by nature, the fruit called *samayamudrā* arises. [This concludes] the third [chapter], the presentation of the *mahāmudrā* as the fruit which is stainlessness.[52]

The *iti* after the quotes does not lead smoothly over to the immediately succeeding feminine relative pronoun and correlative construction (*yā sā*). The presence of the latter implies, as in the description of the *dharmamudrā* in the same text (i.e., the *Caturmudrānvaya*), the directly preceding feminine attributes at the beginning of the definition. In other words, if the passage with the quotations starting with *tathā ca* were removed, *yā sā* would perfectly fall into place with the feminine attributes of *mahāmudrā* at the beginning.

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50 I could not locate this quotation in the *Jñānālokālāṃkāra* itself, but the same passage is quoted in Rāmapāla's *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* (Mathes 2007:555), and Maitrīpa's *Amanasikārādhara* (see Mathes 2010:14).

51 See JĀA, $146_{1\text{-}2}$.

52 CMA, $102_{8\text{-}18}$: *āḥ mahāmudreti / mahatī cāsau mudrā ceti mahāmudrā / mahāmudrā niḥsvabhāvā jñeyādyāvaraṇavivarjitā śaradamalamadhyāhnagaganasaṃkāśā sakalasaṃpadādhārabhūtā bhavanirvāṇaikasvarūpā / anālambanakaruṇāśārīrā mahāsukhaikarūpā / tathā ca /*
amanasikārā dharmāḥ kuśalā manasikārā dharmā akuśalāḥ /
pravacane ca /
avikalpitasaṅkalpa apratiṣṭhitamānasa /
asmr̥ty amanasikāra nirālamba namo 'stu te //
iti yā sā mahāmudrety abhidhīyate / tayā mahāmudrayācintyasvarūpayā samayamudrākhyaphalaṃ jāyate / // mahāmudrāvaimalyaphalanirdeśas tr̥tīyaḥ //

4.1. Madhyamaka-based *Mahāmudrā* in the *Sekanirdeśa*

Whether it is itself an interpolation or not, the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra* unmistakenly links *mahāmudrā* with the view of non-abiding, and the practice of becoming mentally disengaged (*amanasikāra*). This connection with a sūtra here is then fully exploited in Maitrīpa's *Sekanirdeśa*, which is, as already mentioned, directly based on the *Caturmudrānvaya*. Thus, the eight verses of the *mahāmudrā* section in the *Sekanirdeśa* are pure Madhyamaka, namely the variety of it which is was labelled Apratiṣṭhāna ("non-abiding"):

Not to abide in anything
Is known as *mahāmudrā*.
Because self-awareness [i.e., *mahāmudrā*] is stainless, [the moments of enjoying]
Manifold [appearances] and so forth do not arise.[53] (SN 29)

Effortless wisdom
Is taken as inconceivable.
What is inconceivable after one has begun to engage in thought,
Cannot truly be inconceivable.[54] (SN 30)

Those who see suchness
In line with Madhyamaka,
Those who realize true reality, are fortunate ones,
Provided that it is through direct awareness.[55] (SN 31)

No superimposition, none whatever—
None of it exists in any respect;
As to the goal of Madhyamaka, it is the absence of superimposition.
Where is then the denying or establishing [of anything]?[56] (SN 32)

The thought that [the world] is without the superimpositions
Of knowledge and objects of knowledge does not make a difference here.
Everything is as it ever was,
[But] the understanding is not as it was before.[57] (SN 33)

53 SN, $56_{11\text{-}12}$: *sarvasminn apratiṣṭhānaṃ mahāmudreti kīrtyate / vimalatvāt svasaṃvitter vicitrāder na sambhavaḥ //*

54 SN, $58_{1\text{-}2}$: *anābhogaṃ hi yaj jñānaṃ tac cācintyaṃ pracakṣyate / saṃcintya yad acintyaṃ vai tad acintyaṃ bhaven na hi //*

55 SN, $58_{3\text{-}4}$: *tathatāṃ ye tu paśyanti madhyamārthānusārataḥ / te vai tattvavido dhanyāḥ pratyakṣaṃ yadi saṃvidā*[a] //
[a] E_S *saṃvidāḥ*

56 SN, $58_{5\text{-}6}$: *yāvān*[a] *sarvasamāropaḥ sa sarvaḥ sarvathā na hi / madhyamārtho nirāropas tatrāpohavidhī kutaḥ //*
[a] E_S *yāvat*

57 SN, $58_{7\text{-}8}$: *jñānajñeyāsamārope*[a] *manyanā*[b] *tatra nānyathā / sarvaṃ*[c] *tathā yathā pūrvaṃ yathā buddhis tathā na hi //*

> The mind [of him], who realizes [directly] that the world has not arisen
> Is purified because of [this] realization.
> For him, the wise one, [this is realized] without effort:
> [In its] original state the world is true.[58] (SN 34)
>
> The thought whose connection [with *nirvāṇa*]
> Has not been cultivated in meditation arises in dependence.
> [But] this very [thought] is *nirvāṇa*.
> Do not create confusion in your mind![59] (SN 35)
>
> He who does not abide in the domain of the remedy,
> Is not attached to true reality,
> And does even not desire the fruit,
> Finds *mahāmudrā*.[60] (SN 36)

Rāmapāla commences his commentary on SN 29 with the quotations of the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra* inserted into the *Caturmudrānvaya*, and makes the following remarkable statement:

> One should not think that this cannot be practised, for thanks to the kindness of [one’s] venerable guru, *mahāmudrā*, which has the defining characteristic of being endowed with all supreme qualities, can certainly be made directly manifest.[61]

That this refers not only to the manifestation of the fruit is clear from Vajrapāṇi’s *Guruparamparākrama-Upadeśa*:

> *Mahāmudrā* is a stainless fruit. Therefore the three moments accompanied by stains (i.e., the moments of the manifold, maturation, and relaxation) do not occur in it. The three joys differentiated by these [moments] (i.e., joy, supreme joy, and the joy of no joy) do not occur in it either. Another reason [for this] is that [in] *mahāmudrā* [practice] the fruit is taken as the path.[62]

---

[a] E_S *jñānajñeyasamāropo* [b] E_S *manyunā* [c] E_S *sarvas*

58 SN, $58_{9\text{-}10}$: *yenājātaṃ jagad buddhaṃ buddhiḥ śuddhaiva bodhataḥ / nijaṃ tasya jagat satyam anābhogena dhīmataḥ //*

59 SN, $58_{11\text{-}12}$: *avibhāvitasaṃbandho vikalpo ’sau pratītyajaḥ / tad eṣa eva nirvāṇaṃ* ([a]*mā kr̥thāś*[a]) *cittavibhraman //*

[a] E_S *notkr̥ṣāś* N *no kr̥thā*

60 SN $58_{13\text{-}14}$: *pratipakṣe sthito naiva tattvāsakto ’pi naiva yaḥ / gārddhyaṃ naiva phale yasya mahāmudrāṃ sa vindati //*

61 SNP (C 18b1; Pe 16a1): ... *aśakyānuṣṭhānatā ca na*[a] *mantavyā / sadgurupādaprasādenāvaśyaṃ sarvākāravaropetalakṣaṇamahāmudrāyāḥ pratyakṣīkartuṃ*[c] *śakyatvāt /*

[a] Pe omits

62 GPKU, 304a4-5: *phyag rgya chen po ni dri ma dang bral ba’i ’bras bu ste / de bas na skad cig ma gsum dri ma dang bcas pa ’dir mi ’byung bas / des phye ba’i dga’ ba gsum yang ’dir mi ’byung ngo / / de bas na dga’ ba bzhi ru mi dbye’o / / rgyu mtshan gzhan yang phyag rgya chen po ni ’bras bu lam du byed pa’o /*

Things could not be clearer: when the fruit, *mahāmudrā*, is taken as the path, the impure joys are not needed. The decisive factor is the kindness of the guru, which is also clear from Rāmapāla's commentary on SN 31:

> If, as a result of abandoning everything "conceptual" (lit. "carving"),[63] this reality is to be experienced directly ... [then] it [can] be known through an awareness [obtained through] the kindness of a genuine guru.[64]

Here we have, in fact, an Indian precedent for the practice Sa paṇ criticized above, *mahāmudrā* as an introduction into the nature of one's mind experienced according to 'pointing-out instruction' of the guru.

4.2. The Quotations in Rāmapāla's Commentary on *Sekanirdeśa* 33–36

Of particular interest are the texts quoted in Rāmapāla's commentary on some of the Madhyamaka verses in the *mahāmudrā* section. The meaning of SN 33, for instance, is illustrated with reference to one of the most famous verses in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the original text of which could be either from Nāgārjuna's *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā* or *Ratnagotravibhāga* I.154:[65]

> There is nothing to be removed from it and nothing to be added.
> The real should be seen as real, and seeing the real you become liberated.[66]

Moreover, we find, in the commentary on SN 33, the following passages being cited: *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 6cd:

> Thorough knowledge of cyclic existence
> Is called *nirvāṇa*.[67]

Lokātītastava 25cd:

> Now as then you are aware of suchness.[68]

Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Devaparivarta:

> Even in the case [where they still] have not manifested, the true nature of Buddhas abides such as it is.[69]

63 The Tibetan has "thought" (*rnam rtog*).

64 SNP (Pe 16b2-3; missing in C): *yady aśeṣollekhaparihārāt tat tattvaṃ pratyakṣam anubhūtaṃ syāt / ... / sadgurupādaprasādavitter jñeyam /*

65 See Takasaki 1966:300.

66 SNP (Pe 17a5-6; missing in C): *nāpaneyam ataḥ kiñcit prakṣeptavyaṃ na kiñcana / draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtato bhūtaṃ bhūtadarśī vimucyate //*

67 SNP (Pe 17a7; missing in C): *bhavasyaiva parijñānaṃ nirvāṇam iti kathyate /*

68 SNP (Pe 17a8-b1; missing in C): *yathā pūrvaṃ tathā paścāt tathātāṃ buddhavān asi //*

69 SNP (Pe 17b2; missing in C): *anutpāde 'pi buddhānāṃ tathaiva dharmatā sthitā /*

Hevajratantra II.4.34ab

> All these phenomena are *nirvāṇa*, but because of delusion they appear to be *saṃsāra*.[70]

And, last but not least a *dohā* by Saraha, which I have not been able to identify.

Lokātītastava 22ab is quoted in the commentary on SN 35:

> Dependent origination is exactly what is thought of as emptiness.[71]

In his commentary on verse 36, Rāmapāla nearly quotes literally from the part of *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* which explains the abandonment of all characteristic signs of the remedy, reality and the fruit by becoming mentally disengaged. In his explanation of the remedy (the second group of characteristic signs) in the *dhāraṇī*, Rāmapāla includes the first set of characteristic signs, constituting what is opposed to liberation:

> "In the [domain of] the remedy," means in [the domain of] the group[72] of interpretative imaginations relating to the remedies which consist of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and insight, inasmuch as [these remedies] are interpreted in terms of an own-being, quality or essence. "[He] who does not abide [in them]," is [written] because he abandons [these interpretative imaginations] by becoming mentally disengaged. Since the group[73] of interpretative imaginations relating to the remedy are abandoned, the group of interpretative imaginations of what is opposed [to liberation], namely, that which consists of the contaminated five *skandha*s[74] of form and so forth can be considered to have been abandoned. This is because in the absence of the [first group the second] perforce does not exist [either].[75]

This corresponds with the following passage from the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*:

> Sons of a noble family! Here, the bodhisattva and great being hears the teaching relating to the non-conceptual, directs his thought to it, and completely abandons all characteristic signs of [false] imagination. He completely abandons,

70 SNP (Pe 17b3-4; missing in C): *amī dharmās tu nirvāṇaṃ mohāt saṃsārarūpiṇaḥ /*

71 SNP (Pe 18a1-2; missing in C): *yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatā saiva matā /*

72 According to the understanding of the Tibetan which has *tshogs pa* for *saṅge.*

73 Again, the Tibetan *tshogs pa* is followed.

74 Lit. "*skandha*s of appropriation" (*et passim*).

75 SNP (Pe 18a3-6; missing in C): *pratipakṣa iti svabhāvaguṇasāranirūpaṇatayā dānaśīlakṣamāvīryadhyānaprajñātmakapratipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpāsaṅge 'manasikāreṇa varjanāt sthito naiva yaḥ / pratipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpāsaṅgaprahāṇyā sāsra*[a]*varūpādipañco*[b]*pādānaskandhā*[c]*tmakavipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpāsaṅgaprahāṇir api draṣṭavyā / tadabhāve etadabhāvasyāvaśyam*[d] *bhāvitvāt /.*

[a] Pe *–śra-* [b] Pe *–ñca u-* [c] Pe *–dhā ā-* [d] Pe *–aṃ*

> as the first [among] them, all characteristic signs of natural [false] imagination (*prakṛtivikalpa*), that is to say, [any] perceived [object] or perceiving [subject]. This characteristic sign of natural [false] imagination is here a characteristic sign of a contaminated entity, and such a contaminated entity is [any of] the five *skandha*s, that is to say, the *skandha*s of form, feeling, ideation, volitional and affective impulses, and consciousness. How does [the bodhisattva] abandon [these] characteristic signs of natural [false] imagination? What becomes manifest by becoming an appearance [is abandoned] by not becoming mentally engaged [with it].[76]
>
> While [the bodhisattva] completely abandons these characteristic signs of [natural] imagination in a gradual way, the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to the remedy, which are different from these [previous ones], occur—that is, become manifest—by becoming appearances. They are as follows: the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation, and insight, that is to say, [a form of false imagination that arises from] interpretations involving an own-being (*svabhāva*), qualities or an essence. These characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to the remedy [the bodhisattva] also completely abandons, by not becoming mentally engaged [with them].[77]

Rāmapāla continues in his commentary:

> "Is not attached to true reality" means "who is not attached to, not fixed upon, the set of interpretative imaginations[78] of true reality which consists of [ideas about] emptiness, suchness, and the like, since [in such cases true reality] is interpreted in terms of an own-being and so forth."[79]

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76 NPDh, 94, [4]: *iha kulaputrā bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'vikalpādhipateyaṃ dharmaṃ śrutvāvikalpam āśayam sanniveśya sarvavikalpanimittāni parivarjayati / sa tatprathamataḥ prakṛtivikalpanimittāni parivarjayati sarvāṇi / yad uta grāhyaṃ vā grāhakaṃ vā / tatredaṃ prakṛtivikalpanimittaṃ yat sāsrave vastuni nimittaṃ / sāsravaṃ punar vastu pañcopādānaskandhaḥ / yad uta rūpopādānaskandhaḥ / vedanopadānaskandhaḥ / saṃjñopādānaskandhaḥ / samskāropādānaskandhaḥ / vijñānopādānaskandhaś ca / kathaṃ punas tāni vikalpanimittāni parivarjayati / ābhāsagamanayogenāmukhībhūtāny amanasikārataḥ /*

77 NPDh, 94-95, [5]: *tasya tāni kramaśo vikalpanimittāni parivarjayataḥ tadanyāni pratipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpanimittāni samudācaranty āmukhībhavanty ābhāsakaraṇayogena / yad uta dānanirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / śīlanirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / kṣāntinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / vīryanirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / dhyānanirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / prajñānirūpaṇavikalpanim ittaṃ / yad uta svabhāvanirūpaṇato vā / guṇanirūpaṇato vā / sāranirūpaṇato vā / sa tāny api pratipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpanimittāny amanasikārataḥ parivarjayati /*

78 The Tibetan reads: "...not attached to the *samādhi* of the collection of interpretative imaginations..."

79 SNP (C 21a1; Pe 18a6-8): *tattvāsakto 'pīti*[a] *svabhāvādi*[b]*nirūpaṇatayā śūnyatātathatādyātmakatattvanirūpaṇavikalpāsaṅge*[c] *'py āsaktaḥ*[d] *saṃsa*[e]*kto naiva yaḥ /*[f]
[a] Pe *-'pi iti* [b] Pe *–pi-* [c] C *–saṃge* [d] C *āśaktaḥ* Pe *āmaktaḥ* [e] Pe *–śa-* [f] C *naiva yaḥ /* is broken off.

This corresponds with the following passage from the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*:

> While [the bodhisattva] completely abandons these [characteristic signs of the remedy], the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to true reality which are different from these [previous ones] occur—that is, become manifest—by becoming appearances. They are as follows: the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to emptiness, suchness, the extreme of reality, the ultimate, and the *dharmadhātu*, that is to say, [signs that arise from] an interpretation relating to either specifically characterized phenomena (*svalakṣaṇa*), qualities or an essence. These characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to true reality [the bodhisattva] also completely abandons, by not becoming mentally engaged [with them].[80]

Rāmapāla continues:

> "Who does even not desire the fruit" means "for whom there is even no desire—craving—for the fruit, [a desire] characteristic of the group of interpretative imaginations of the first [bodhisattva] level up to the final attainment of omniscience." He finds—attains—*mahāmudrā*. Therefore, inasmuch as it is the [true] nature of the world, which is characterized by non-abiding and the lack of superimposition, *mahāmudrā*, it is declared, is free from all attachment. For it signifies the absence of attachment to what is opposed [to liberation], the remedy, reality, and the fruit.[81]

This corresponds with the following passage from the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*:

> While [the bodhisattva] completely abandons these [characteristic signs relating to true reality], characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to attainment which are different [from these previous ones], occur—that is, become manifest—by becoming appearances. They are as follows: the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to the attainment from the first up to the tenth level, [including] the characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to the attainment of being able to endure the fact that phenomena do not arise; prophecy; completely pure Buddha-fields;

80 NPDh, 95, [6]: *tasya tāni parivarjayataḥ tadanyāni tattvanirūpaṇavikalpanimittāni samudācaranty āmukhībhavanty ābhāsakaraṇayogena / yad uta śūnyatānirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / tathatānirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / bhūtakoṭinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / paramārthadharmadhātunirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / yad uta svalakṣaṇanirūpaṇato vā / guṇanirūpaṇato vā / sāranirūpaṇato vā / sa tāny api tattvanirūpaṇavikalpanimittāny amanasikārataḥ parivarjayati /*

81 SNP (C 21a1-3; Pe 18a8-b2): *gārddhyaṃ naiva phale*[a] *yasye*[b]*ti prathamabhūmyādisarvākārajñatāntaprāptinirūpaṇavikalpāsaṅgarūpaṃ phale gārddhyaṃ kāṅkṣā*[c] *yasya nāsti / mahāmudrāṃ sa vinda*[d]*ti labhate / etenāprati*[d]*ṣṭhānānāroparūpajagadātmatayā vipakṣapratipakṣatattvaphalāsaṅgavigamena sarvāsaṅgavinir*[e]*muktāṃ mahāmudrām ācaṣṭe /*
[a] Pe *phala* [b] C *gārddhyaṃ naiva phale yasye*- is broken away [c] CPe *kāṃkṣā* [d] C *–ti labhate / etenāprati*- is broken away [e] Pe om. *–nir*-

> causing sentient beings to mature; empowerment; all the way up to omniscience, that is to say, [a sign that arises] from an interpretation involving either specifically characterized phenomena, qualities or an essence. These characteristic signs of the interpretative imagination relating to attainment [the bodhisattva] also completely abandons, by not becoming mentally engaged [with them].[82]

This perfectly establishes the relation that the *mahāmudrā* practice of becoming mentally disengaged has not only to the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* but also to the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*,[83] according to which non-conceptual wisdom is cultivated by abandoning the same set of characteristic signs. Rāmapāla further explains that this *mahāmudrā* view of non-abiding and practice of becoming mentally disengaged includes all six perfections:

> Are there no perfections of generosity and so forth in *mahāmudrā*? No, for the simple reason that this [*mahāmudrā*] consists of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom, which cover all the perfections and so forth. This has been taught in the *Viśeṣavittibrahmaparipṛcchā Mahāyānasūtra*:[84]
>
> > Giving up all defilements is generosity;
> > Being free from mental effort is discipline;
> > Being free from defining characteristics is patience;
> > Not making distinctions is diligence;
> > Non-abiding is meditation;
> > Being free from mental fabrication is insight.[85]

82 NPDh, 95, [7]: *tasya tāny api parivarjayato 'parāṇi prāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittāni samudācaranty āmukhībhavanty ābhāsakaraṇayogena / tad yathā prathamabhūmiprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / yāvad daśabhūmiprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / anutpattidharmakṣāntiprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / vyākaraṇaprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / buddhakṣetrapariśuddhiprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / sattvaparipākaprāptinirūpaṇavikalp animittaṃ / abhiṣekaprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / yāvat sarvākārajñatāprāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittaṃ / yad uta svalakṣaṇanirūpaṇato vā / guṇanirūpaṇato vā / sāranirūpaṇato vā / sa tāny api prāptinirūpaṇavikalpanimittāny amanasikārataḥ parivarjayati /*

83 For a discussion of *amanasikāra* in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, see Mathes 2010:8-9.

84 According to Tōhoku Catalogue, no. 160: *Āryabrahmaviśeṣacintiparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra*.

85 See Bkra shis chos 'phel: *rGya gzhung dkar chag*, 11a1-2: "Not to think [in terms of what belongs to you or me] is generosity. Not being selective [with respect to rules followed (i.e., I'll follow this rule but not that)] is discipline. Not to distinguish [between friend and foe] is patience. Neither to adopt nor to abandon is diligence. Not to be attached is meditation. Not to engage in conceptual thought is insight." (*khyad par sems kyis zhus pa'i mdo las / mi sems pa ni sbyin pa'o / tha dad ma yin pa ni tshul khrims so / / bye brag mi 'byed pa ni bzod pa'o / / blang dor med pa ni brtson 'grus / / ma chags pa ni bsam gtan no / / mi rtog pa ni shes rab bo /*)

> It is thus established that the perfection of insight (*prajñāpāramitā*) is simply what is characterized by non-abiding and freedom from mental fabrication.[86]

This has been taught in the *Saptaśatikā [Prajñāpāramitā]*:

> The illustrious one asked: “When you, Mañjuśrī, cultivate (i.e., meditate on) the perfection of insight, on what do you rely?” Mañjuśrī answered: “Illustrious one, when I cultivate the perfection of insight, I do this without being supported [by anything].” The illustrious one asked: “Mañjuśrī, what is the cultivation of the perfection of insight for you who are not supported [by anything]?” Mañjuśrī answered: “Illustrious one, this very cultivation of the perfection of insight is the non-abiding in anything.” The illustrious one asked: “Mañjuśrī, when you cultivate the perfection of insight, which of the two is the case, does your basis of virtue increase or decrease?” Mañjuśrī answered: “Illustrious one, at this time no part whatsoever of my base of virtue increases or decreases. That [yogin], illustrious one, for whom any [of his] qualities increase or decrease, is not cultivating the perfection of insight. Illustrious one, that [practice] which is approached for the sake of increasing or decreasing any quality, should not be known as the cultivation of the perfection of insight. Illustrious one, that is the cultivation of the perfection of insight which does not abandon the qualities of ordinary people nor appropriate the qualities of a Buddha.[87]

If one accepts Rāmapāla’s line of thought, the perfection of insight (Prajñāpāramitā) must be taken here as *mahāmudrā*, too. This equation is attested in another Indian source, namely Jñānakīrti’s *Tattvāvatāra*:

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86 SNP (C 21a3-b1; Pe 18b2-6): *tarhi mahāmudrāyāṃ dānapāramitādīnāṃ ki*[a]*m abhāva eva / na / tasyā eva sarvapāramitādyātmakapuṇyajñānasambhāradvayarūpatvāt / tad uktam viśeṣavi*[b]*ttibrahmaparipṛcchāmahā*[c]*yānasūtre /*[c] *yaḥ sarvakleśaparityāga idaṃ dānam / yo ’nabhisaṃskāra idaṃ śīlam / yāla*[d]*kṣaṇatā (!) iyaṃ kṣāntiḥ /*[e]*yo ’vi*[e]*veka idaṃ vīryam / yad aprati*[f]*ṣṭhānam idaṃ dhyā*[f]*nam / yāprapañca*[g]*tā (!) iyaṃ prajñā / etenāpratiṣṭhānāprapañca*[g]*rūpaiva prajñāpāramiteti sthitam /*
[a] C om. *ki-* [b] Pe *–ci-* [c] C *–yānasūtre /* is broken off [d] C *yā ala-* Pe *yā ’la-* [e] C *yāvi-* [f] C *-ṣṭhānam idaṃ dhyā-* is broken off [g] C *–paṃca-*.

87 SNP (C 21b1-5; Pe 18b6-19a7): *tad uktaṃ saptaśatikāyām / bhagavān āha / yasmin samaye* ([a]*tvaṃ mañju*[a])*śrīḥ prajñāpāramitāṃ*[b] *bhāvayasi tadā kutra pratiṣṭhāya prajñāpāramitāṃ bhāvayasi /*[c] *mañjuśrīr āha / yasminn ahaṃ bhagavan samaye prajñāparamitāṃ bhāvayāmi / apratiṣṭhito ’ham tasmin samaye prajñāpāramitāṃ bhāvayāmi / bhagavān āha / apratiṣṭhitasya te mañjuśrīḥ kā prajñāpāramitābhāvanā / mañjuśrīr āha / saiva*[d] *bhagavan prajñāpāramitābhāvanā yan na kvacitpratiṣṭhānam / bhagavān āha / yasmin samaye tvaṃ mañjuśrīḥ prajñāpāramitāṃ bhāvayasi kataraṃ te*[e] *kuśalamūlaṃ tasmin samaye* [f]*upacayaṃ gacchaty apaca*[f]*yaṃ vā / mañjuśrīr āha / na me bhagavan tasmin samaye kiñcit kuśalamūlam upacayaṃ gacchaty apacayaṃ vā / nāsau bhagavan prajñāpā*[g]*ramitāṃ bhāvayati yasya kasyacid dharmasyāpacayo vā upacāyo vā / na sā bhagavan prajñāpāramitābhāvanā veditavyā yā kasyacid dharmasyāpacayāyopacayāya vā pratyupasthitā / sā bhagavan prajñāpāramitābhāvanā yā naiva pṛthagjanadharmān jahati nāpi buddhadharmān upādatte ityādi //*
[a] C *tvaṃ mañju-* is broken away [b] C *–tāyāṃ* [c] C omits [d] Pe *sai* [e] Pe *–ran te* [f] C *upacayaṃ gacchaty apaca-* is broken away [g] C from here on not available.

> Another name for the very great mother (Tib. *yum chen mo*) Prajñāpāramitā is *mahāmudrā*, given that the latter's nature is that of non-dual wisdom.[88]

That Jñānakīrti's *Tattvāvatāra* was known to Maitrīpa's circle, is clear from Sahajavajra's commentary on *Tattvadaśaka*, verse 8.[89]

5. Vimalamitra's *Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don*

It is interesting that two centuries earlier, Vimalamitra refers in his *Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don* to a similar set of sūtras in order to describe a sudden and non-conceptual form of realization. The *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* thus plays for him the same important role to bolstering the non-conceptual approach of abandoning, by becoming mentally disengaged, the misguided projection of characteristic signs onto true reality. Gomez observes that this went so against the orthodox Indo-Tibetan interpretation that passages from Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s were inserted into Vimalamitra's text in order to explain away doctrinal aspects which were too close to Ch'an for orthodox scholastics.[90] Similar differences to Kamalaśīla's interpretation of *amanasikāra* as the fruit of analytic meditation[91] were evinced by Maitrīpa's disciple Sahajavajra, who explains in his commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka* that contrary to the *Bhāvanākrama*s, meditation (including deep insight meditation) is performed with a non-analytical mind right from the beginning.[92] Sahajavajra goes on to quote the *Sekanirdeśa* in order to establish the relation between his interpretation of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* and *mahāmudrā.*[93]

In support of his instantaneous approach, Vimalamitra also quotes the famous verse from the *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā* that nothing needs to be removed or added.[94] The idea is to simply refrain from wrongly projecting or denying anything, dependent origination thus being instantly revealed for what it truly is, namely emptiness. Rāmapāla quotes this verse with a similar purpose in mind, and adduces in support *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* 6cd, *Lokātītastava* 25cd, the *Devaparivarta* of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā, Hevajratantra* II.4.34 and an unidentified *dohā* by Saraha. All these quotes state that *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are not different—the ontological

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88 The relevant passage from the *Tattvāvatāra* has been quoted in the *Subhāṣitasaṃgraha* (SBhS, $388_{14\text{-}15}$) and is thus available in its original Sanskrit: *prajñāpāramitaiva bhagavatī mahāmudrā 'paranāmnī tasyā advayajñānasvabhāvatvād.*

89 See my analysis of the *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā* in Mathes 2006.

90 Gomez 1983:397.

91 Mathes 2010:9-10.

92 Brunnhölzl 2007:174; Mathes 2006:217.

93 Mathes 2008:39.

94 Vimalamitra: *Cig car 'jug pa'i rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don*, 12a1-2: *slob dpon nā gā rdzu nas rten 'brel gyi snying po mdzad pa las kyang / 'di la bsal (*text: *gsal) ba gang yang med // gzhag par bya ba ci yang med // yang dag nyid la yang dag lta // yang dag mthong nas rnam par grol zhes gsungs so /*

presupposition of all instantaneous access to the nature of mind. Liberation simply results from not abiding in any extreme. The passage from the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā* quoted in the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* reinforces the idea of not removing or adding anything, and it too can be taken as being in line with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, namely that no Buddha qualities need to be strengthened, nor any fault weakened—an essential tenet of Vimalamitra's thought.

When addressing the issue of neglecting the perfections of generosity, discipline and so forth, Vimalamitra quotes the **Vajrasamādhisūtra*:

> As long as the mind is not distracted from emptiness, the six perfections are contained [in it].[95]

This is then further elaborated by a description of the six perfections from the *Viśeṣavittibrahmaparipṛcchā Mahāyānasūtra*—a version very similar to the one in the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* above:

> Not to think is generosity;
> Non-abiding is discipline;
> Not to differentiate is patience;
> Neither to adopt nor to abandon is diligence;
> Not to be attached is meditative concentration.
> Non-duality is insight.[96]

A comparison of this description with the presentation of the six perfections quoted by Rāmapāla shows their common view of non-abiding and the practice of not becoming mentally engaged. Now that we have a Sanskrit version of this passage, there are no grounds any more for being overly cautious and labelling it "aprocryphal" or "Chinese Ch'an." It should be noted that Vajrapāṇi, too, distinguishes in the *Guruparamparākrama-Upadeśa* an instantaneous from a gradual path;[97] and in his *dohā*s Saraha repeatedly encourages us to simply view the mind in order to find great bliss and genuine accomplishment (a practice commonly prescribed in Ch'an).[98]

95 *Ibid.*, 14a8: *sems stong pa nyid du mi g.yo na pha rol tu phyin pa drug 'dus so /*

96 *Ibid.*, 14a8-b1: *mi sems pa ni sbyin pa / mi gnas pa ni tshul khrims / ci yang bye brag mi byed pa ni bzod pa'o / blang 'dor med pa ni brtson 'grus / ma chags pa ni ting nge 'dzin / mi gnyis pa ni shes rab /*

97 Mathes 2007:548-549.

98 DKP $143_{3\text{-}4}$: "Hey, you fools! Analyze [your] mind with [your] mind, and [then] you will be free from all wrong views. [Everything] must be purified [and dissolved] into the nature of great bliss. Supreme accomplishment depends on this." (*cittahiṁ citta ṇihālu vaḍa saala vimucca-kudiṭṭhi / paramamahāsuhe sojjha paru tasu āattā siddhi /*)

5. Conclusion

The *Caturmudrānvaya* and the *Sekanirdeśa* do not describe the sequence of the four seals in such a rigid way as Sa paṇ would liked to have seen it: the practice of *karmamudrā* is optional and only meant for yogins of inferior capacities, *mahāmudrā* remaining a direct goal just as in the *dohā*s. *Mahāmudrā* had been associated with the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra* in the *Caturmudrānvaya*, and profiting from this, Maitrīpa and Rāmapāla introduced a Madhyamaka-based *mahāmudrā* on the basis of a set of texts that were already adduced by Vimalamitra in support of an instantaneous and non-conceptual approach. It could be argued that Vimalamitra was influenced by Ch'an masters while in China, but how about the tantric Nāgārjuna, Maitrīpa, and Rāmapāla? None of them had been to China, and it would not make sense to speak of Ch'an influences on the Indian Siddha tradition.

General Abbreviations

AICSB *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University*
B dPal spungs edition of the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung* (see Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan)
C Cambridge manuscript of the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* (see SNP (C))
P Peking bsTan 'gyur
Pe The *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* manuscript from St. Petersburg (see SNP (Pe))

Primary Sources (INDIAN)

AKṬ *Amṛtakaṇikāṭippaṇī*
See AKUN
AKUN *Amṛtakaṇikoddyotanibandha*
Ed. by Banarsi Lal in: Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti *with* Amṛtakaṇikāṭippaṇī *by Bhikṣu Raviśrījñāna and* Amṛtakaṇikodyota-nibandha (sic) *of Vibhūticandra* (Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica 30). Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994.
GPKU *Guruparamparākramopadeśa* (Tibetan translation)
"Bla ma brgyud pa'i rim pa'i man ngag". *Phyag rgya chen po'i rgya gzhung*, vol. *hūṃ*, fol. 290b-320b. Dpal spungs block print.
CMU *Caturmudropadeśa* (Tibetan translation)
"Phyag rgya bzhi'i man ngag". *Phyag rgya chen po'i rgya gzhung*, vol. *hūṃ*, fols. 9a-13b. Dpal spungs block print.
CMA *Caturmudrānvaya*
— In *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*. Ed. by the Study Group on Sacred Tantric Texts. AICSB 11 (March 1989), pp. 253-238 (=92-107).

— NGMPP 22/24 (=N), fols. 19b2-22b2

— Tokyo Manuscript (T), fols. 38a1-41b6 (Fol. 38 is not missing, only fol. 18. Fol. 38 was probably mistaken as fol. 18 and so placed between fols. 17 and 19).

JĀA *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*
Ed. by the Study Group on Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, The Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University. Tokyo: Taisho University Press, 2004.

TD *Tattvadaśaka*

— In *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*. Ed. by the Study Group on Sacred Tantric Texts. AICSB 13 (March 1991), pp. 245-243 (=92-94).

— NGMPP 22/24 (=N), fol. 36a6-b5

— Tokyo Manuscript (=T), fols. 20b6-21b1

TV *Tattvaviṃśikā*

— In *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*. Ed. by the Study Group on Sacred Tantric Texts (=E_S). AICSB 12 (March 1990), pp. 299-293 (=66-72).

— NGMPP 22/24 (N), fols. 33a2-34a4

DK_S *Dohākośagīti*
In Shahidullah 1928:123-65.

DK_T *Dohākośagīti* (Tibetan translation)
In Shahidullah 1928:123-65.

DKP *Dohākośagītipañjikā*
Ed. by Prabodh Ch. Bagchi. In *Journal of the Department of Letters* (Calcutta University Press 28), pp. 52-120.

NP "Nairātmyāprakāśa." Unpublished edition by Harunaga Isaacson.

NPDh *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*
Ed. by Kazunobu Matsuda. See Matsuda 1996:93-99.

MNS *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*
Ed. by A. Wayman in *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.

SN *Sekanirdeśa* (also: *Sekanirṇaya*)

— In *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*. Ed. by the Study Group on Sacred Tantric Texts (=E_S). AICSB 13 (March 1991), pp. 289-271 (=48-66).

— In *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*. Ed. by Haraprasad Shastri. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1927 (= E_{Sh})

— NGMPP 22/24 (=N), fols. 17a5-19b2;

SNP (C) *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*
Sanskrit manuscript from Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Or. 149.

SNP (Pe) *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*
Sanskrit manuscript from St. Petersburg, Gosvdarstvennaja Publicnaja Biblioteka im. M.E. Saltykova-Ščedrina, MS. 283.

SBhS *Subhāṣitasaṃgraha (Part 1)*
Ed. by Cecil Bendall. In *Le Muséon* 4 (1903), pp. 375-402.

HT *Hevajratantra*
Ed. by Ram Shankar Tripathi and Thakur Sain Negi (Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica 48). Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2001.

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— See also Zhva dmar pa Mi pham chos kyi blo gros: *Nges don phyag chen mdzod*, vol. 1-3

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